



# **Exploring the Indigenous Face of Europe**

**Rethinking Fairytales, the Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and Glass Mountain before Cinderella**

**Roslyn M. Frank**



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# Exploring the Indigenous Face of Europe

## Rethinking Fairytales, the Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and Glass Mountain before Cinderella

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The information I have presented will probably convince most people that there are very sound reasons for believing that the cult of Sant-lago is merely the transferring of an ancient tradition into another channel. The tradition of sanctity is obviously pre-Christian, and the question arises as to why Santiago de Compostela was so early a sacred site. (Howes, 1925a: 148)

I have wandered in Miss Cox's collection with admiration of her industry and method, with some despair, too, as to the possibility of ever tracing the Cinderella type to its origin and home. (Lang, 1967 [1892]: vii)

Everybody says, "After you take a bear's coat off, it looks just like a human".

Maria Johns (cited in Snyder, 1990: 164)

Still round the corner there may wait  
A new road or a secret gate;  
And though I oft have passed them by,  
A day will come at last when  
I shall take the hidden paths that run  
West of the Moon, East of the Sun..."  
J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Lord of the Rings"

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The spires of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela at dusk with Pico Sacro in the distance. Source: By [Noel Feáns](#) (Flickr). Source: <https://caminoon.com/pico-sacro/>.

## 0.0 Preface

This monograph examines the way two sets of wide-spread European folktales became incorporated into the storytelling traditions of Europeans. The stories themselves will be compared and treated as reservoirs of orally transmitted popular beliefs and traditions that are no longer readily accessible to a modern audience. It will be shown that the tales themselves have acted as vehicles for transmitting an earlier animist worldview from one generation to the next, albeit with modifications. When viewed in the *longue durée*, certain repetitive elements found in the tales will reveal their ethnographic value and allow us to reconstruct, always tentatively, the animist ontological framing that contributed to their creation. After carefully exploring the interpretive framework that characterized the tales in times past, a framework shared by storytellers and their audiences alike, what will come into focus is a worldview unfamiliar to most Europeans, but well known to Native Americans and Indigenous groups where bear ceremonialism has been or still is practiced and whose traditional narratives incorporate the belief that bears were ancestors and therefore kin (Barbeau, 1945; Bieder, 2006: 168-169; Rockwell, 1991: 116-121; Shepard & Sanders, 1992: 59-60).

The comparative analysis of the European tales will serve as an introduction to a larger question, namely, whether traditions associated with the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela (the Way of St. James) have a pre-Christian origin and more specifically, whether the choice of this specific geographic location for the “discovery” of the remains of St. James was motivated by the geomorphological characteristics of the nearby mountain peak called Pico

Sacro and the legends that had grown up around it. This approach includes the possibility that the mountain was already the focal point of a pre-Christian pilgrimage tradition. Using the results obtained from analyzing the recurring motifs found in the two sets of folktales, what will be suggested is that the ecclesiastic authorities who came up the story about the miraculous discovery of the Saint's remains eight hundred years after he was allegedly buried, may have been aware that people were already regularly visiting Pico Sacro and that this site was already the subject of veneration and enveloped in a form of sacrality. In this scenario, the founders of the alleged discovery of the relics of St. James may have realized that if they could come up with the right story, they could overlay it on an already existing pilgrimage tradition. In that way they would be able to co-opt the already existing practices and profit from them in a myriad of ways. The process of superimposing a Christian narrative on the pagan practices and beliefs would be facilitated by inventing a story, based on the discovery of the tomb of one of Christ's own disciples.

In the folktales discussed here there is a motif that surfaces over and over, namely, a journey to a location referred to as Glass Mountain or Crystal Mountain. Furthermore, folkloric references to this steep mountain are widespread in Europe. It is directly linked the belief that upon death one's soul must successfully scale the peak to be able to enter Paradise. And in some cases, it was customary for the dead to be buried along with the claws of a bear, in the belief that the bear claws would aid the soul to climb that steep mountain (Grimm, 2012: 836).

Pico Sacro is located 12 kilometers from the town of Santiago de Compostela and the cathedral that is said to house the remains of St. James. Although the mountain is not particularly formidable in terms of its height, the site has a quite remarkable feature that undoubtedly caught the attention of people in times past, namely, its geomorphology. Pico Sacro is part of a quartz dyke about 17 km long, 2 km wide and 400 m deep, elongated from north-west to south-east. The vein, one of the largest and deepest in the world, consists of semi-crystalline quartz and hyaline quartz, while the quartz itself, is characterized by its extreme whiteness and purity (Groba González & Vaqueiro Rodríguez, 2004). The most representative visual element of the quartz dyke is Pico Sacro itself whose quartz outcroppings have a glassy appearance and shimmer when hit by the rays of the sun (Castellà Ferrer, 1610).

If we assume that Pico Sacro is the physical counterpart of the place referred to as Glass Mountain or Crystal Mountain in the fairy tales, it follows that there might have been pre-Christian traditions of pilgrimage connected to that site. And this raises the question of how the older narrative came to be overlaid by a Christian one as well as what aspects of that older narrative are still accessible to us, both being topics that will be investigated in detail in the pages that follow.

Before beginning, however, a few words are needed concerning the terminology and approach that will be utilized. Today some folklorists prefer to use the term *Märchen* or ‘wonder tale’ rather than ‘fairy tale’ to refer to a genre of tales as it has been defined by Thompson (S. Thompson, 1977 [1946]: 8): as “a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite creatures and is filled with the marvelous. In this never-never land, humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms and marry princesses.” Moreover, in fairy tales the motifs and characters tend to be simple, indeed, archetypal in nature: youngest sons confronting dragons and ogres, accompanied by magical helpers, often talking animals, along with references to glass mountains. However, the concept of genre in folklore has been caught in a tangle of overlapping and at times contradictory definitions. Whereas the fairy tale is considered a distinct genre within the larger category of folktale, the precise definition that would mark a work as a fairy tale continues to be a source of considerable dispute (Flieger & Anderson, 2014; Zipes, 2015).<sup>1</sup> -For this reason, in the present study the terms ‘folktale’ and ‘fairy tale’ will be used interchangeably when discussing the stories.

## 1.0 Introduction

Imagine, if you would, just for a moment, what the world might look like if you had grown up hearing that your kin included bears, that humans themselves descended from bears, that upon death your soul might go on to inhabit the body of a bear and, conversely, that bears you see there in the woods might transform into humans. This relational ontology implies a certain deceptiveness of appearances, an instability of outward form for both human and other-than-human persons (Hallowell, 1960). In the process it ruptures the divisive duality which has been at the heart of Western thought for several millennia, namely, the conceptual divide that separates human animals from the rest. Furthermore, as Hallowell has observed in his study of Ojibwa ontology, social behavior and worldview, the self-image a child acquires makes intelligible not only the nature of self but also the nature of other selves (Hallowell, 1960: 43). In the process, as Hallowell also observed in the Ojibwa case, that child would have been pre-

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<sup>1</sup> Zipes (2015), for example, begins his introductory essay with these words: “There is no such thing as the fairy tale; however, there are hundreds of thousands of fairy tales. And these fairy tales have been defined in so many different ways that it boggles the mind to think that they can be categorized as a genre. In fact, the confusion is so great that most literary critics continually confound the oral folk tale with the literary fairy tale and vice versa. Some even argue, to the dismay of folklorists, that we might as well label any text or narrative that calls itself and is called a fairy tale as such since the average reader is not aware of the distinction between the oral and literary traditions or even cares about it. Why bother with distinctions when very few people necessarily want them? There is even a strong general tendency among many readers in the West to resist defining the fairy tale. It is as though one should not tamper with sacred material. By dissecting the fairy tale, one might destroy its magic, and it appears that this magic has something to do with the blessed realm of childhood and innocence.”

equipped by songs, stories and sayings. These would have directed the child's attention to facets of the world that mirrored what was being heard, talked about and reinforced by observing the social practices of parents and other adults. In this way certain words would have become fully saturated with the texture of phenomena that in turn would be understood to confirm and underscore the basic tenets of the cosmovision itself.

Even though this kind of fluidity of being and its potential for shapeshifting are concepts quite foreign to modern Europeans, they would be familiar to those who have studied the tenets of bear ceremonialism as it has been practiced by indigenous people in North America and Eurasia. In fact, the belief that our ancestors were bears is quite widespread in the northern hemisphere where bears have cohabited with humans for thousands of years. However, the fact that a similar cosmovision once existed in Europe falls outside the realm of possibilities that have been contemplated by European folklorists. Moreover, if we were to seriously consider the possibility that Europeans once believed they descended from bears it would radically alter the lens through which the concept of 'personhood' was understood in times past. And it would also affect the way that certain European folktales, considered until now of little significance, once played a role in keeping alive this much older animist relational ontology.

In the pages that follow we will explore the question of whether evidence can be brought forward in support of this thesis. To do so, two groups of European folktales will be subjected to analysis. Their interpretation will be reframed using a comparative approach drawing on the animist relational ontology well documented among Native American and Eurasian peoples who once practiced or still practice bear ceremonialism and embraced the idea that bears are ancestors and kin. The exploration of the European tales will be supplemented by ethnographic materials which appear to harken back to the same pan-European animist-oriented belief system.

Over the past forty years I have explored the ramifications of an archaic belief that I encountered while doing fieldwork among the Basque people in the 1980s, namely, that Basques used to believe humans descended from bears. Although my informants had alluded to aspects of this belief indirectly, it was not until 1986 that a report documenting the belief was published (Peillen, 1986). Up until that time, apparently it had been passed down orally from one generation of Basque speakers to the next, who, in the process, were always careful not to share the information with non-Basque speakers. Soon after I discovered the existence of this ursine genealogy, other bits and pieces of ethnographic evidence began to fall into place, among them folktales that speak of a young woman who mates with a bear and gives birth to a child, a half-human, half-bear offspring.

Once the ursine origin of humans was plugged into the interpretive frame of these stories, the adventures of the main character took on a new significance. As a result, I began to process other European ethnographic and ethnohistoric data through a different lens, one that was no longer purely anthropocentric in nature, but rather more animist. When it is viewed through that more archaic lens, the human-animal divide, so typical of Western thought, becomes blurred or dissolves entirely. In addition, this animist interpretive framework challenges the belief in ‘human exceptionalism’, a topic that has received far more attention from researchers in recent years than in the past (Porr & Matthews, 2016; T. Thompson, 2019). Moreover, the interpretive framework can be easily subsumed into discussions of relational ontologies currently going on in the fields of anthropology and ethnology where it has been categorized as the “new animism” (Bird-David, 1999; Harvey, 2006; Morrison, 2013).

Whereas evidence for the belief that bears are ancestors and therefore kin has been well documented among North American and Eurasian indigenous peoples (Berres, Stothers, & Mather, 2004; Hallowell, 1926; Lapham & Waselkow, 2020; Rockwell, 1991), that such a belief once informed the daily lives and social practices of Europeans had not been contemplated until relatively recently (Bertolotti, 1992, 1994; Edsman, 1996; Lajoux, 1996; Pauvert, 2014; Shepard, 1999, 2007; Shepard & Sanders, 1992). Yet there are many folkloric traces pointing to the veneration of bears, particularly in the Pyrenean region and even more concretely in Euskal Herria, the historical Basque Country (Figure 1).





**Figure 1.** The seven provinces of Euskal Herria, the historical Basque Country, three that are in France (light yellow) and four on the Spanish side of the border. Names in this map are in Basque. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basque\\_Country\\_\(historical\\_territory\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basque_Country_(historical_territory)).

It was not until the end of the twentieth century when the Basque anthropologist Txomin Peillen (1986) first published his interview with the last two Basque-speaking bear hunters of Zuberoa (Soule)—an elderly father and his son—that we had concrete written evidence of the mindset that accompanied this archaic belief in bear ancestors. There is reason to assume that it had been circulating orally for a long time even though it was never mentioned when talking to non-Basque speakers (Frank, 2008c). In that interview, after the tape-recorder had been turned off, Petiri Prébende, the father, started talking about bears, namely, European brown bears (*Ursus arctus*). And when he did, he stated the following: “Lehenagoko eüskaldünek gizona hartetik jiten zela sinhesten zizien” (“Basques used to believe that humans descended from bears”). He went on to talk about the power of bear paws and how “the bear had created human beings” (Peillen, 1986: 173).

Hence, evidence emanating from the Pyrenean zone, most especially from zones in which Euskara (Basque), a language classed as pre-Indo-European, is still spoken, should be examined with more care. It could be indicative of the existence of a more widespread pan-European belief system that was overlaid and obscured over time. Moreover, once one begins to look, there is

substantial evidence that bears played a special role in the belief system of Europeans; that the veneration and respect paid to bears may well have been grounded in a similar understanding, one that allowed bears to be viewed as ancestors and kin as well as being attributed supernatural powers (Corvino, 2013; Frank, 2008a, 2009; Lajoux, 1996; Pastoureau, 2011; Pentikäinen, 2007).

## 2.0 “The Bear’s Son” and an Overview of the European folktale

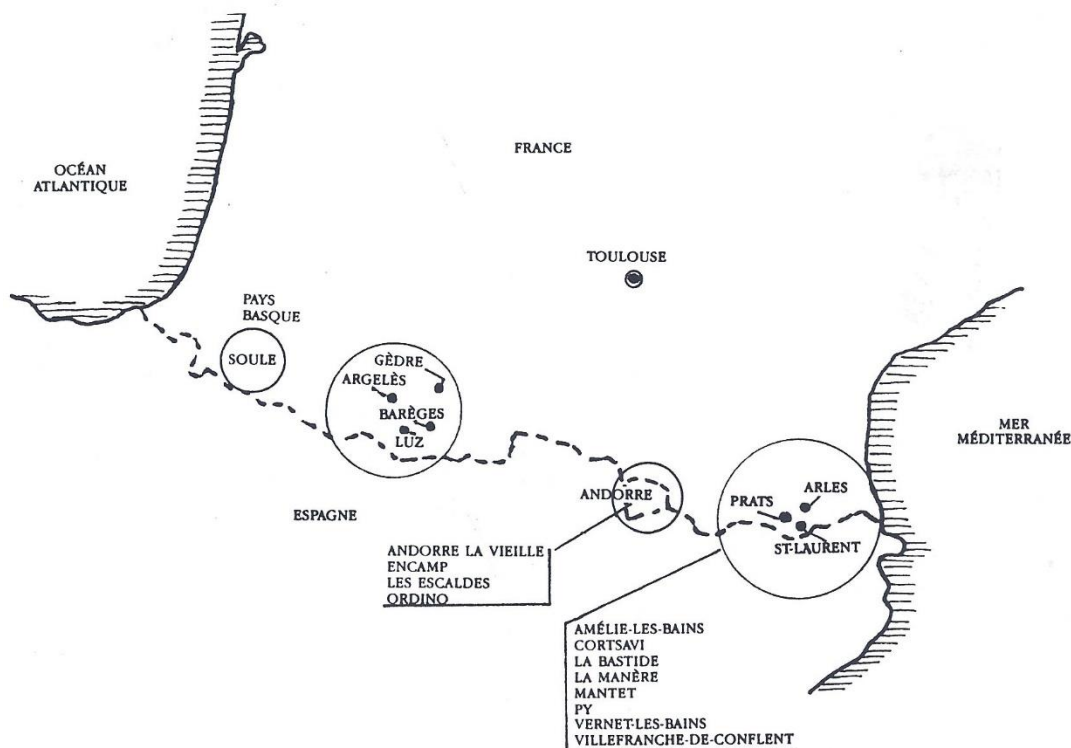
In the pages that follow I will discuss two thematically related sets of European folktales and demonstrate how they provide evidence for the earlier existence of this animist ontology. In one set the main protagonist is portrayed as having an ursine genealogy. His father is a bear and his mother a human female. The tale is known as “The Bear’s Son” and along with its variants it is one of the most widely disseminated European folktales ever recorded (Frank, 2019, in press). The term utilized here, that is, “The Bear’s Son,” is an informal one, used in conjunction with “John the Bear” to refer to a set of related narratives, categorized formally by folklorists as tale type ATU 301. “The Bear’s Son” is the term used to refer particularly to versions of the tales that have been compared to northern sagas, such as *Beowulf*. In other instances, the same set of tales is assigned a title that highlights the name of the protagonist in that language: *John the Bear* in English, *Juan el Osito* in Spanish, *Jan de l’Os* in Catalan, *Jan l’Ourset* in Gascon, *Jean de l’Ours* in French, *Giovanni l’Orso* in Italian, *Hans Bär* in German and *Ivanuska* as well as *Ivanko Medvedko* in Slavic languages.

The worldview reflected in the storyline with its half-human, half-bear protagonist has never been the subject of serious investigation. Questions have never been asked concerning the reason that the hero was assigned this genealogy in the beginning. Neither has there been any concerted attempt to study the European tale taking into consideration the hunter-gatherer mentality and animist cosmology firmly embedded in stories found among Native Americans and Siberian groups where bears are considered ancestors and therefore kin (Frank, forthcoming). In those tales a woman often marries or mates with a bear and has offspring, a plotline that incorporates not only the concept of an ursine genealogy but also the fluid notion of identity and personhood that regularly goes along with this relational ontology (Barbeau, 1945; Hallowell, 1926; Rockwell, 1991; Shepard & Sanders, 1992; Wallace, 1949).

Some of the most well-preserved versions of this set of European tales, including those evidencing the most archaic structural elements and most undisturbed plotline, emanate from former Basque-speaking zones of France and the Spain and from the current Basque-speaking

region itself.<sup>2</sup> This is the same region, as noted, in which the belief that humans descended from bears continued to circulate well into the twentieth century. Indeed, some of the most remarkable variants of the tale itself have been collected in the westernmost part of Europe, especially in the Pyrenean zone and its immediate environs. This is the same zone where elaborate *fêtes de l'ours* (Figure 2) are still celebrated each year which feature ritualized bear hunts (Gastou, 1987; Gual, 2017; Pauvert, 2014; Truffaut, 1988, 2010).

Figure 2. Pyrenean sites where ritual bear hunts are carried out on or around Candlemas, February 2nd.  
Source: Gastou (1987: 20).



Further research concerning this core belief has highlighted the strong possibility that it was once present across much of Europe. Even though explicit references to the ursine genealogy of humans have not been documented in the rest of Europe, there are many cultural practices and beliefs that point to the previous veneration of bears and the belief in bear-ancestors (Corvino, 2013; Frank, 2008a, 2008c, 2009; Pastoureau, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Although analysis of the individual tales recorded in the Pyrenean region lies outside the scope of this paper, there are many written sources (Arratibel, 1980: 65-74; Barandiaran, 1973-1983, II: 301-305; Barbier, 1991 [1931]: 84-94, 129-132, 151-152, 157-158; Bidart, 1978: 80-83; 1979: 130-137; Cerquand, 1986 [1875-1882]: 78-85; Satrustegui, 1975: 18-21; Vinson, 1883: 90-92).

When bears are viewed as kin as well as ancestors, a fluidity of being is produced that ruptures the asymmetric dichotomies so firmly entrenched in SAE languages (Standard Average European languages) and, hence, our familiar ways of thinking (Whorf, 1941). Indeed, two of the most pervasive dichotomies have been the culture vs. nature split and the apparently insurmountable human-animal divide. In contrast, we have the terms “human persons” and “other-than-human persons” used by Hallowell (1960) in his study of the concept of personhood associated with the ontology and worldview of the Ojibwe people, an Algonquian-speaking Native American group. The Ojibwe, also referred to as Ojibwa, Saukteaux or Chippewa, are an Anishinaabe people residing in what is currently southern Canada, the northern Midwest of the United States, and the Northern Plains.

The expression “other-than-human persons” calls into question the human exceptionalism commonly associated with Western thought. Moreover, as McNiven has shown: “Anthropological theorizing informs us that the human-animal duality of Western thought is limited in scope for most of humanity and most of human history, where the human-animal divide was more commonly seen as ontologically fluid and permeable and understood in terms of overlapping personhood [...]” (McNiven, 2013: 97). Also, as is well known, although rarely kept in mind, the terms *culture* as well as *nature*, as we use them today, are concepts of relatively recent coinage, each having evolved out of quite different conceptual frames of understanding than those currently associated with them. Indeed, asymmetric polarities, such as that of culture vs. nature, which currently sit at the center of debates on the so-called “ontological turn” in ethnography, anthropology and archaeology are themselves in need of serious reflection, not simply because of what they stand for today, but also because until recently little attention has been paid to the processes that led to the current discursive instantiation of these polarities in Indo-European languages, and most especially in English (Paleček & Risjord, 2013).

In a certain sense, debates focused on the so-called ontological turn that have been taking place in some corners, center on a semantically instantiated polarity that evolved out of much earlier philosophical discussions that were taking place during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The contemporary meanings attached to each member of the culture/nature polarity are often treated unreflectively as if they always had the same meanings assigned to them (Latimer & Miele, 2013). Even though they are deeply entrenched in modern philosophical and anthropological conceptual frames of thought, as they currently stand, the terms are simply the most recent iterations of the meanings assigned to the two words themselves, i.e., culture and

nature (Haldyn, 1950: 461-554; Lovejoy, Boas, Chinard, & Crance, 1935; Williams, 1978: 11-20; 1980: 67-85).<sup>3</sup>

Speaking of the ontological turn that is sweeping through other disciplines, at the center of the debates is the notion of relational ontologies, a concept that will be brought to bear in the present analysis (Hill, 2011). Moreover, it is this attention to relational ontologies that has given strength to the ontological turn and debates that have been taking place in ethnographic, anthropologic, and archaeological circles over the past twenty years impacting both theory and practice (Rodseth, 2015; Swancutt & Mazard, 2018; Watts, 2013). It is a movement that calls into question the foundational tenets of modernity and was given impetus initially by Latour's earlier work, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993).

The new framework can be expressed in two ways. One way is to recognize that other societies, past and present, experience life in different ways; that they have access to different life-worlds. Hence, a key to understanding such non-Western societies is to reconstruct their ontologies for the latter are a fundamental component of their underlying cosmology and, hence, overall worldview (Haber, 2009; Nadasdy, 2007). A somewhat different approach is to recognize the ontological turn as a theoretical tool that requires us to assume a more reflexive attitude concerning the core beliefs of Western thought, especially the dualisms that are so deeply engrained in that world view, e.g., the human-animal divide, the mind-body opposition, and the stark culture-nature dichotomy. And this requires a major conceptual reorientation that is not easily accomplished since many of these core beliefs are held without reflection. They form the background of unarticulated convictions which the holder may not even recognize are operating.

It has long been recognized that other cultures, past and present, do not necessarily share the worldview that is dominant in the West. With the ontological turn emphasis is now being placed on understanding such societies by reconstructing the ontological commitments inherent in them, including the concept of animism. That approach also speaks of engaging with indigenous ontological commitments as a legitimate way of reconfiguring Western concepts and social practices. At the same time, however, this approach demands taking up a new position vis-à-vis one's own discipline and belief system. And this in turn requires a more reflexive attitude concerning one's own core beliefs. In 2016, Alberti expressed this conundrum in a kind of third-

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<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that there is a connection between those processes that led to the modern asymmetric dichotomy of culture vs nature and to its corollary, the asymmetric opposition setting humans apart from animals (Lovejoy, 1960 [1936]; Lovejoy et al., 1935). The dualisms are interlocking. Ideologically, they have provided mutual support for each other for many centuries. The category of 'animal' is analogized to refer to any 'inferior being', and by extension, that same role is played by the 'body' in the case of the mind vs body dualism. Just as 'human' is to 'animal', 'mind' is to 'body', instantiating a hierarchy of 'superior' versus 'inferior'. In many instances, this same highly entrenched Western dualist mode of thought has situated human females on the same side as 'animals' (Frank, 2005).

person neutral manner: “the difference between the two [expressions of the ontological turn] lies in the degree to which an approach is willing to do ontology to itself, how much critique it is willing to direct at its own ontological assumptions” (Alberti, 2016: 174).

The question, therefore, comes down to the degree to which researchers can become aware of the core beliefs affecting and constraining their own ontological assumptions and hence acting together as an interpretative filter for the data under investigation, data whose interpretation is otherwise often considered to be undertaken objectively and that the data themselves are quite self-explanatory. This is the same problem that Hallowell confronted when he tried to communicate his findings concerning the ontology, behavior and worldview of the Ojibwe to his Western acculturated readers. He began by offering a definition of the concept of worldview, saying that it is “that outlook upon the universe that is characteristic of a people” (Hallowell, 1960: 19). He went on to write:

Human beings in whatever culture are provided with cognitive orientation in a cosmos: there is ‘order’ and ‘reason’ rather than chaos. There are basic premises and principles implied even if these do not happen to be consciously formulated and articulated by the people themselves. We are confronted with the philosophical implications of their thought, the nature of the world of being as they conceive it. If we pursue the problem deeply enough we soon come face to face with a relatively unexplored territory—ethno-metaphysics. Can we penetrate this realm in other cultures? [...] The problem is a complex and difficult one, but this should not preclude its exploration. (Hallowell, 1960: 20)

When discussing the European materials and the remnants of bear ceremonialism encountered in them, there is an associated limitation that needs to be addressed. Implicit in the interpretative framework often utilized by researchers, albeit unreflectively, is the assumption that agency should be assigned only to humans. In cultures where non-human entities are regularly assigned agency, there has been a tendency to define this as “animism” and set that belief apart from Western thought. When doing so, however, one fails to recognize the fact that Western culture itself is not monolithic. It has multiple ontological spaces and regularly assigns agency to non-human entities, often ritual objects or things having less official religious recognition, such as a lucky rabbit’s foot or a badger paw (Frank, 2017a). Moreover, it follows that the resulting anthropocentric framework of agency is colored by assumptions deriving from the prevailing set of Western asymmetric dualisms, the foremost among them being the human-animal divide and the concept of human exceptionalism that accompanies it (Frank, 2005, 2018).

Consequently, the current investigation should be viewed as a kind of experiment in which the analysis of two sets of folktales will be the central focus. And in the process of analyzing them, they will be mined for evidence of this earlier animist relational ontology. Whereas the actions of the first set of stories, those in which the main character is the Bear’s Son, are quite well known, to my knowledge, no attempt has ever been made to link the figure of the half-bear,

half-human protagonist to this earlier animist relational ontology once prevalent in Europe. Nor has anyone suggested that the second set of European tales contains traces of an ontology that is analogous to the one implicit in Native American traditional narratives in which humans and bears often take off and put on bearskins. In the process they are transformed, humans into bears and bears into humans.

### 3.0 The tale “El Castillo de Oropé” (“The Castle of Oropé”)

The second set of stories is exemplified by a less familiar text recorded in Soria, Spain, called “El Castillo de Oropé” (“The Castle of Oropé”) (A. M. Espinosa, 1924: 260-264; Gaertner, 1984: 60-74). The tale is a variant of what is classified as “The Search for the Lost Husband” or “The Animal as Bridegroom” (ATU 425A). This tale type also includes the well-known Norwegian stories “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” and “White Bear King Valemon.” The general tale type ATU 425 contains subtypes made up of other well-known stories. For example, there is ATU 425B categorized under the rubric of “Son of the Witch” (previously, “The Disenchanted Husband: The Witch’s Tasks”), the best known of which is “Cupid and Psyche.” As Uther notes, there are many structural similarities between types 425A and 425B, “and often the variants are not clearly identified as belonging to one type or the other” (Uther, 2011: 252). A third subtype is ATU 425C known as “Beauty and the Beast.”<sup>4</sup>

In reference to the essential elements of ATU 425A, Uther has listed them as being the “wife’s quest and gifts” and the “nights bought” since the heroine trades the tokens she receives along the way to get to spend three consecutive nights at her estranged husband’s bedside (Uther, 2011: 249).<sup>5</sup> As soon will become apparent, the Spanish language version from Soria contains elements of significant interest when it comes to attempts to reconstruct the plot of earlier versions of the tale and the way that the actions of the heroine were socio-culturally contextualized in times past.

In “El Castillo de Oropé” the third daughter (the youngest) of a broom-maker is taken to the house of the *hardacho*. The exchange comes to pass in the following way. One day the broom-maker goes walking through the woods collecting broom grass, when suddenly he runs into the *hardacho* who says to him: “Listen, you can take all the broom that you want from here (the forest) provided that you bring me your youngest daughter.” And the broom-maker promises to do so. In this manner, the *hardacho* eventually acquires the youngest daughter of the broom-

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed overview of the ATU 425 tale type and its subtypes, cf. Uther (2011: 247-256). <http://surlalunefairytales.blogspot.com/2013/10/beauty-and-beast-and-atu-425-search-for.html>. And for a discussion of the plot of “East of the Sun, West of the Moon,” cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East\\_of\\_the\\_Sun\\_and\\_West\\_of\\_the\\_Moon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_of_the_Sun_and_West_of_the_Moon).

<sup>5</sup> For further detailed discussion ATU 425 and a breakdown of its variants, cf. Uther (2011: 247-256).

maker for his wife. Implicit in that bargain is the role of the *hardacho* as the lord of the forest with rights over what happens in it.

At first, the broom-maker tries to pass off his oldest daughter to the *hardacho*. But the *hardacho* refuses her and asks again for the youngest. The broom-maker brings the next youngest and again the *hardacho* refuses, demanding the youngest. Finally, it is the youngest daughter who goes to the home of the *hardacho* and is married to him.

Each night when they go to bed the *hardacho* takes off his coat, his skin of *hardacho* (*piel de hardacho*),<sup>6</sup> and turns into a handsome prince and the young woman is very happy. Each day when he gets up, he again dons his *hardacho* skin. When he does so, he tells her not to tell anyone about their secret because under no circumstance does he want to lose the *piel de hardacho* that he removes every night when he goes to bed. But the heroine's two sisters make fun of her, taunting her: "Shut up. You're the one that has gotten married to a *hardacho*. Who would put up with being married to a *hardacho*."<sup>7</sup> At this point she becomes quiet and says nothing because she knows that she was married to a handsome prince.

Finally, at the urging of her two sisters, she decides to burn the *hardacho*'s coat while he is asleep. When he awakes and discovers what she has done, he tells her that now she will have to go out into the world as a penitent, that is, as a pilgrim or *peregrina*. The text in question is the following:

But one day when they [her sisters] made so much fun of her, she told them that her husband was a beautiful prince and that he took off his *hardacho* skin when he went to bed. And then her sisters told him: "Well, look, tonight when he goes to bed and falls asleep, take his *hardacho* skin and go and burn it." And she so she did. After he laid down and fell asleep she went and took the *hardacho* skin and burned it. And when he woke up and saw that his skin was missing, he asked her where it was and she told him that she had burned it. And he told her: —Well, now I'm disenchanted, but now you'll have to go on a pilgrimage. Take this pilgrim dress and these iron shoes. And because you've disenchanted me before it was time, you can't come back to me until these shoes are worn out, and now you have to go look for the Castle of Oropé.] (Gaertner, 1984: 62).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In Spanish the term *piel* translates into English as 'fur' and is regularly applies to the 'fur coat' of an animal. Or it can refer the notion of the 'skin' or 'hide' of an animal.

<sup>7</sup> All direct quotes have been taken from Spanish text of the tale and translated by the author.

<sup>8</sup> "Pero un día de tanta burla que le hacían les dijo que su marido era un hermoso príncipe y que se quitaba la piel de *hardacho* cuando se acostaba. Y entonces le dijeron sus hermanas: —Pues, mira, esta noche cuando se acueste y se duerma le quitas la piel de *hardacho* y vas y se la quemas. Y así lo hizo. Luego que se acostó y se durmió fue y se llevó la piel de *hardacho* y la quemó. Y cuando él despertó y vio que le faltaba su piel le preguntó dónde estaba y ella le dijo que se la había quemao. Y él le dijo: —Pues ahora ya estoy desencantao, pero tú tendrás ahora que irte de peregrina. Toma este vestido de peregrina y estos zapatos de hierro. Y porque me has desencantao antes de tiempo no puedes volver a mí hasta que estos zapatos no se acaben, y tienes que ir a buscar el Castillo de Oropé" (Gaertner, 1984: 62).



Apparently, this outcome should be viewed as a kind of punishment for having burned his *piel de hardacho*. Moreover, her husband hands her the garb of a pilgrim that she is to wear along with the 'iron shoes' (*zapatos de hierro*). In the tale she is referred to repeatedly as a pilgrim and we see her knocking on doors and asking for help, as a pilgrim would. As she begins her pilgrimage, we might imagine her dressed in ragged clothes, garments typical of a humble and repentant pilgrim of times past. Her face might even be smeared with soot and ashes as a sign of her being a penitent. At this point her husband tells her she will not see him again until her iron shoes wear out. Exactly where he is heading is unclear, but he indicates that she will find him at a place called the Castillo de Oropé.

Before continuing to examine the plot of this tale, we need to make a short detour which will allow us to better understand what the storyteller had in the back of his/her mind when narrating the plight of the heroine at this juncture in the story. Even though in the tale no mention is made of any specific pilgrimage route, given that the story was collected in Soria, Spain, there is little doubt that the storytellers were familiar with the pilgrimage route of Santiago (St. James), its significance and quite possibly some of the legends surrounding how the northwestern hinterlands of the Iberian Peninsula became the final resting place of an apostle martyred in Jerusalem. Here we need to remember that other than notes from apocryphal texts there is no evidence whatsoever that James ever set foot in Iberia, yet alone that his remains were buried there. Nonetheless, by the twelfth century the number of pilgrims visiting his tomb rivaled that of Rome and Jerusalem.

Indeed, from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, the journey to Santiago de Compostela was one of the most famous pilgrimage routes in all of Europe. Certainly, the reference to the heroine having to undertake a pilgrimage because of her misdeed would have triggered other images that would have helped members of the audience to explain what happened as the plot unfolded and the reason the heroine is portrayed as a *peregrina* after she burned her husband's skin. As we have noted, during the Middle Ages the Camino de Santiago brought pilgrims from across all of Europe. It received papal support from Rome early on which greatly increased Santiago's prestige. This occurred when Pope Calixto II conferred the coveted Jubilee, or Holy Year, status in 1122 to the shrine. That status or Jubilee grace permitted plenary indulgences to be conferred on those who visited the site during those years when July 25 (St. James's feast day) occurred on a Sunday.

When July 25 falls on a Sunday, the Compostela Holy Year is celebrated, which happens every 6, 5, 6 and 11 years. And, as might be expected, during the Middle Ages this would cause the number of pilgrims taking part in the pilgrimage to swell in such years. In other words, by undertaking a pilgrimage to the Santiago de Compostela during any of these years, participants

received remission for all past sins. And, as a result, their souls would not have to suffer in Purgatory, but rather would ascend directly to Heaven. We shall revisit the topic of the relationship between pilgrimage and salvation at the end of this study as well as the question of how the successful completion of a journey to the top of Glass Mountain might relate to the legends surrounding the Camino de Santiago, the Cathedral in Compostela and the mountain nearby called Pico Sacro.

For now, we need to fill in a few other gaps concerning how the tale “El Castillo de Oropé” was probably received by audiences in times past. For instance, there is the question of how the members of the audience would have imagined the heroine once she was dressed as a pilgrim. Unless pilgrims going to Compostela were wealthy, they carried little and relied on the religious charity or alms of hospices and monasteries to maintain themselves while they undertook the arduous journey. As for the clothing they wore and the overall appearance of the latter class of pilgrims, they often wore special garments to mark their state of penance. This distinctive set of garments and accessories distinguished them from other travelers as proper recipients of wayside charity. Typically, medieval pilgrims journeying to Compostela carried a simple walking staff and an *escarcela*, scrip or bag with a strap that could be worn across the shoulders. The latter’s purpose was for transporting the pilgrim’s minimal possessions, possibly including a begging bowl.

As noted, because of their status as pilgrims and based on the medieval model of charity, they could count on receiving food and housing at hospices and monasteries along the way. Their chief garment was a tunic, usually black or brown in color, and normally made of the roughest fabric, sometimes worn or ragged (Frey, 1998:13-14). An additional sign of their status as penitents might be the soot and ashes smeared on their faces. Another important consideration was suitable footwear. As Melczer points out, “[t]he shoes had to be both well-made and solid, but at the same time sufficiently light and practical. Shoemakers and shoe repairmen stationed at major pilgrimage centers and working out of workshops at times made up of their lap only, had a busy time mending out-trodden shoes of the marchers. [...] Soles and heels, as always were the most affected parts of the footwear” (Melczer, 1993: 56-57). Obviously, the fact that her husband gives her ‘iron shoes’ which she not only had to wear but wear out would have caught the attention of listeners. Concomitantly, the challenges presented by such footwear could have been understood to have increased the spiritual merit conferred by the physical hardship of the heroine’s journey. Moreover, this rather bizarre detail would have fit well with the overall penitential theme of the practice of pilgrimage.

Thus begins the pilgrimage of the young woman. In her search for information about how to get to the Castillo de Oropé, she first goes to the door of a convent. Although the nuns welcome

her, they are unable to help. She spends the night there. In the morning she is given an acorn with instructions that if she finds herself in need, she can break it open. The nuns send her on to a monastery where she also spends the night and on leaving the friars give her another nut. Still unsuccessful in finding anyone who can help her locate El Castillo de Oropé, she is sent on to the castle of the Moon. She knocks on the door and asks about El Castillo de Oropé. She is met by a witch who acts as the doorkeeper. Next the Moon's daughters come to the door. But neither the Moon nor her daughters can help her. So, the heroine goes from there to the castle of the Sun and is received by his sons. Finally, she is sent to the castle of the air, that is, the Wind, and is met at the door by the Breezes, the children of the Wind. The Wind also appears as a fearsome creature.<sup>9</sup>

It is the Wind who finally flies the pilgrim off to the Castle of Oropé and leaves her at its doorstep. Upon her arrival at the castle there is a lot of commotion going on. She goes in posing as a pilgrim and asks for alms. She is told to enter since they always give alms to the poor. She brings with her a very pretty spinning wheel and begins to spin. We find out that the reason there is so much activity at the castle is because they are preparing for the wedding of the princess. When the princess sees the pilgrim with her spinning wheel she says: "What a beautiful spinning wheel the pilgrim has!" And she tells her maid to buy it for her. When the pilgrim is asked how much she wants for her spinning wheel she says that she will give it to the princess if she is allowed to speak three words with the prince.

In the text collected by Espinosa, when the pilgrim arrives, she already has a beautiful spinning wheel with her, but there is no explanation as to how she obtained it.<sup>10</sup> This detail suggests that there is a gap in the story. Other versions indicate that what has been left out are the discussions that take place when the heroine first arrives at the castle and asks to speak with the

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<sup>9</sup> In other European versions of this tale type, references to the stopovers at the two Catholic sites are omitted even though the latter mesh well with the theme of pilgrimage and of the heroine, in her status as a pilgrim, receiving a warm welcome. In other versions of the tale, namely, those in which the searcher is male, there are occasional allusions to a sequence that includes an encounter with a star along with the Sun and the Moon. Hence, it is possible that heroine's search once included a stop at the house of the Morning Star. If so, this would have created a kind of celestially coded sequence consisting of Sun, Moon and Morning Star with the house of the Wind being the final stop. Even the Wind is sometimes represented in three forms, as the East Wind, the West Wind and finally the North Wind. Uther points out that on her way, the heroine "is given directions and precious gifts by the sun, moon, wind and stars" (Uther, 2011: 249).

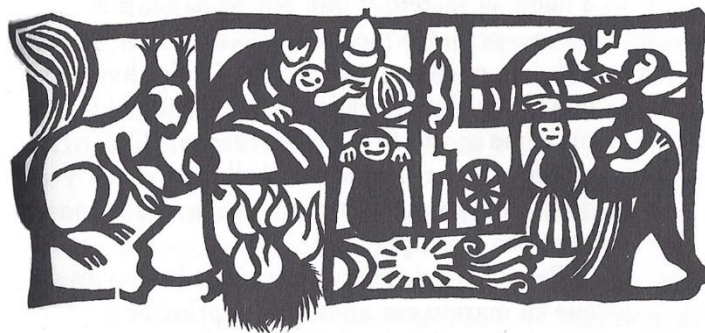
<sup>10</sup> Apparently, there is some confusion on the part of the storyteller over how many nuts the heroine has been given. The gift of an acorn is only mentioned in the case of the nuns and the friars. However, later it is clear that she uses up three of the magic nuts to get to talk to her husband in the Castle of Oropé. We can assume that the person telling the story forgot to mention the acorns she got at one of her other stopovers. The inconsistency also points to the fact that the storyline has been modified. As noted, when compared to other versions, the sites where the heroine seeks help do not include nunneries and monasteries. Rather they seem to be additions that accrued to the way the tale was told in the area of Soria, details that were meant to infuse the tale with realism, given the prevalence of such Catholic institutions in the countryside.

prince. In those conversations, she trades one of her magic acorns after another for the opportunity to speak with him. And it is the first nut that turns into a marvelous spinning wheel. In the current text, although the storyteller forgets to explain where the spinning wheel comes from, we are informed that the reason for all the commotion is that they are preparing for the wedding.

The text then goes on to say that the pilgrim agrees to turn over the spinning wheel but only on the condition that she is allowed to speak to the prince for by now the heroine has realized that the prince is her husband. But the princess has given the prince a sleeping potion so that when the pilgrim comes into the room, he cannot hear her words. That first night she says to the sleeping prince, "Do you remember that my father was a broom-maker?" But the prince doesn't hear her. She repeats her question three times.

She then breaks open another nut and receives another magic spinning wheel even more beautiful than the one before. At this point she returns to the bedside of the sleeping prince and asks him, "Do you remember when I burned your skin of *hardacho*?" Once again, she has no luck. But on the final try and after using up her very last magic acorn, she asks him three questions that recapitulate, chronologically, the action of the plot, ending with a final reference to her worn out iron shoes: "Do you remember when my father was a broomstick maker? And the prince says to her, "Yes." "Do you remember when I burned your skin of *hardacho*?" "Yes." "Do you remember when you gave me the garb of a pilgrim and the iron shoes?" And at this point, since that night he managed not to take the sleeping potion, he recognizes her, and eventually they are reunited.

### 3.1 Commentary on "El Castillo de Oropé"



**Figure 3.** An illustration of the plot of "El Castillo de Oropé" with the *hardacho* portrayed as a squirrel (*Eichhörnchen*). Source: Gaertner (1984: 63).

Our more detailed analysis of "El Castillo de Oropé" begins on a linguistic note, namely, with a discussion of information included in a footnote to Gaertner's translation of the Spanish text into

German. That note concerns the expression used to refer to the main character in the story, that is, the *hardacho*: “Die Form ‘hardacho’ statt ‘ardacho’ is beibehalten worden. Sie erklärt sich als Augment ‘arda’. Die aspirierte Form ‘harda’ findet sich in älteren Texten und heute noch in verschiedenen Dialekten” (Gaertner, 1984: 120). The assumption that the expression *hardacho* is an augmentative form of a stem in *\*arda* leads the German translator to turn the creature in question into a ‘large squirrel’, concretely into “ein große Eichhorn.” Here I believe the logic was the following. First, *\*arda* was assumed to be the root of the Spanish word *ardilla* ‘squirrel’. Then the translator assumed that *-acho* was a kind of augmentative suffix which certainly is not unreasonable. This line of reasoning is quite understandable given that in centuries past the word for ‘squirrel’ appears written as *harda* as well as *hardilla*.

However, this line of reasoning also creates a rather bizarre animal protagonist, “ein große Eichhorn,” that, on the other hand, does have a furry coat, although squirrels are not known for shedding their coats. In this fashion, in the process of passing from one language to another, certain assumptions are made about the term used to refer to the protagonist of the tale, a term not explicated in the text itself. As a result, the secondary text produced, here the German translation, brings to the fore a rather unlikely and totally other-worldly marriage between a young woman and a very large squirrel. The translation into German also allows for a semantic correspondence to be set up with the type of talisman given to the pilgrim, namely, an acorn which translates as “Eicher” in the German text.<sup>11</sup> However, as will be shown, that German translation has several other problems, not just the creation of a rather fantastic protagonist, a giant squirrel who takes his fur coat on and off each night.<sup>12</sup> There is a clear lesson that can be

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<sup>11</sup> I would note that in standard German the term for ‘acorn’ is ‘Eichel’ while ‘squirrel’ is rendered as “Eichhörnchen.”

<sup>12</sup> A similar type of semantic confusion may explain the odd element that appears in a story called, in English, “The Burning Trough” and in the German original, “Der feurige Backtrog” (von Schönwerth, 2015: 58-59). Here the term *Backtrog* refers to a kind of kneading trough, a wooden tray upon which dough was prepared for baking. Given that this story appears to be a variant of the tale “The Castle of Oropé” (ATU 425A) analyzed here, a few comments are in order. First, in the German tale at the juncture in the storyline where the broom-maker runs into the *hardacho* in “The Castle of Oropé”, the creature that jumps out before the farmer is, instead, described as a dwarf, “ein Männchen.” The latter says to the farmer: “You will never have to work another day of your life if you just let me spend the night with one of your daughters.” The farmer agrees and the eldest daughter offers to spend the night in bed with the dwarf. However, before this happens, there is knock at the door and when she opens it, all she can see is “a trough in flames”. Terrified, she slams the door. The second daughter also doesn’t want to have anything to do with the “burning trough”. Next, the dwarf shows up at the door, furious, because he’s been humiliated. At that point, the youngest agrees to go to bed with him. In contrast to her sisters, when she sees the “trough in flames,” she jumps into it, hugs and kisses whatever is there and asks it to come into her room. And at that moment, the ‘monster’ turns into a handsome young man. The scene is the following in the German original: “Aber auch die zweite Tochter wollte von dem feurigen Backtrog nichts wissen. Wütend erschien am nächsten Morgen der Zwerg an der Haustür und wollte die Schmach gesühnt wissen, da erbot sich Anna, die dritte, den Kleinen zu sich ins Bett zu nehmen, und sie hielt Wort. Denn als sie den feurigen Backtrog erblickte, sprang sie darauf zu, umarmte und küsste ihn und lud ihn ein, zu ihr einzutreten. In diesem Moment wurde das Ungetüm zum schönen Jüngling, welcher dem Mädchen sehr gefiel.” The story continues and various familiar elements show up, e.g., three gifts, this time made of gold; the

learned from this example. In the past when tales passed from one language to another, the process involved bilingual speakers, at least initially, so that it was the storyteller's knowledge of the original language and the culturally backgrounded understandings embedded in the tale that determined the fidelity of the translation. In other words, such translations from one language to another was one juncture in which modifications in the text easily could have been introduced, changes caused by faulty understandings of the original (Frank, 2019).

At this point we can turn to the true meaning of *hardacho*, a regionalism typical of this region of northern Spain. Members of the local audience whose vocabulary included the term *hardacho* would have understood the male character to be a lizard, known, among other things, for eating the fruit that falls from the trees. Other common terms for lizard were *fardacho* and *gardacho* whose etymology Corominas takes back to an Arabic word, *hardûn*, which he translates as 'lizard' (Corominas, 1980-1991 [1954]).<sup>13</sup>

The species of lizard in question is the ocellated lizard (*Timon Lepidus*) which can grow to 60 cm (two feet) in length. This reptile is the largest lizard in Western Europe. While its average length (including its tail) is between 50 cm and 60 cm (20 to 24 inches), according to some authors, can reach 80 cm or 90 cm (31.5 to 35.4 inches) in length in some ecosystems. Like snakes, lizards shed their skins, too. However, in contrast to snakes that shed their entire skin all at once, that is, their entire coat, lizards shed their skins in pieces.

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search for the young man, her husband-to-be; an encounter with the Moon and the Sun; the presence of slippers; the exchange of three gifts of gold for the right not to talk to, but rather to sleep next to "the man who was her master"; and the final obligatory reconciliation and marriage of the pair. Whereas in "The Castle of Oropé" there is only one dual-natured character who shapeshifts, in "The Flaming Trough" the dwarf is not explicitly identified as the same entity as "the burning trough" that appears at the door and then eventually shapeshifts from being the 'monster' ('das Ungetüm') into a handsome youth. We find the dwarf appearing at the door as well as the flaming trough, an object that is described as a monster who shapeshifts into a human being. My suspicion is that the expression "der feurige Backtrog" came about because of a misunderstanding of some other expression that was once meaningful and used earlier to refer to the male protagonist/monster. I am indebted to Dr. Maria Tatar, who translated von Schönwerth's tales and wrote the introduction to the volume, for kindly sharing the German original of this story with me.

<sup>13</sup> Pastor Blanco (2010: 506) gives the following information concerning the term, indicating that it is a regionalism common to the Ebro river valley: "*hardacho* 'lagarto': regionalismo propio del valle del Ebro (riojano, alavés, soriano, navarro, aragonés, valenciano, conquense), derivado probablemente del árabe *hardûn* 'lagarto' e incorporado a nuestra lengua como en tantos otros casos a través del mozárabe. Pero además de la forma *hardacho*, en La Rioja existen igualmente otras formas sinónimas para designar a este reptil, como *gardacho* y *zardacho*, también mozárabes, dignas del mayor interés. La primera de ellas, recogida en el diccionario académico como propia de alaveses y navarros, es una variante antigua de *hardacho*, documentada cuando menos ya en el siglo XIII, que hoy se consigna también de manera habitual en puntos riojanos muy diversos lo mismo que en los zaragozanos de Tarazona y Mallén, y en el Alto Aragón. De particular interés es por otro lado la tercera forma aludida, *zardacho*, viva en el pueblo riojabajeño de Igea y así mismo escuchada en los zaragozanos de Alconchel y Ateca, que parece inseparable del valenciano *sarvatxo* 'lagarto', acaso de ascendencia bizantina."



**Figure 4.** Hardacho (Lagarto ocelado). Source: <https://bicheando.net/2017/07/lagarto-ocelado-el-lagarto-mas-grande-de-europa/>.





**Figure 5.** The *hardacho* or *lagarto ocelado* in a defensive posture. Source: De Veinticuatro de Jahén - Trabajo propio, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=78874895>.

I would also note that in the geographical region where the story was collected, namely, in the east of Castilla y León, the lizard referred to as an *hardacho* seems to have taken on magical qualities in the popular imagination. Certainly, identifying the male character using the name of an animal that sheds its skin adds a degree of logic and continuity to the tale, at least for speakers who recognized the meaning of the term *hardacho* which is found only in these Northern dialects of Spanish. The theme of the lover who takes off his skin and puts it back on would have led to a search for an animal equivalent. In other European versions of ATU 425A attempts to find a logical explanation for the shapeshifting often produced the identification of the male character with a snake or serpent. Hence, we have tales with titles such as Basile's "The Enchanted Snake" and "The Serpent Prince" recorded in India.<sup>14</sup>

In his exhaustive study of the motifs found in folktales classed as ATU 425, Swahn has an extended section in which he lays out the multitude of shapes that storytellers have attributed to the supernatural or enchanted husband who appears in the tale. Based on his tabulations of these hundreds of examples, the animal forms which most frequently occur are bear, dog, wolf, swine

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Uther, 2011: 249-250 for a full listing of the variants of ATU 425A.



and snake. “Of these variations, ‘bear’ is the most usual in the Germanic and Slavonic areas outside of which it seldom occurs” (Swahn, 1955: 228).<sup>15</sup> It is tempting to speculate that the frequency of the portrayal of the supernatural husband as a bear in Germanic and Slavonic-speaking zones is related in some fashion to the fact that in both these language groups the common Indo-European name for ‘bear’ is absent. As Pastoureau has noted, the Germanic veneration for the bear shows that the animal was a being apart, an intermediary creature between the animal and human worlds and even considered an ancestor or relative of humans (Pastoureau, 2011: 2). During the Middle Ages, veneration of bears was not confined to the Germanic world for it was also deeply engrained among the Slavs, who admired the bear as much as the Germans did.

Further proof of this deep respect for bears lies in the fact that both Germanic and Slavic languages use *noa* terms—euphemisms—to refer to the animal. This recalls the wide-spread pattern of semantic avoidance documented among the indigenous peoples of North America and Eurasia where bear ceremonialism was or still is practiced (Black, 1998: 46-52; Nagy, 2017; Sokolova, 2000). As is well known, the Germanic as well as the Slavic words for ‘bear’ are not the same as those used in the other Indo-European languages (Buck, 1988 [1949]; Pokorny, 1959, III, 875 ). The words for ‘bear’ in other Indo-European languages derive from a common Proto-Indo-European root, namely, *\*h<sub>2</sub>rtkos*.<sup>16</sup> It is logical to assume that the semantic avoidance evidenced in Germanic and Slavic languages was brought about because earlier speakers of these languages were operating from a mindset similar to that of indigenous hunter-gatherer populations who also show deference to bears, often viewing them as kin or ancestors and believing that bears hear everything that is said, especially what is said about them (Gates St-Pierre, St-Germain, & Laperrière-Désorcy, 2020: 154-155).

The substitute term utilized in Slavic languages was ‘honey-eater’, e.g., *медведи* in Russian, while Germanic tribes came up with the euphemism of the ‘brown one’, an expression that gave

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<sup>15</sup> The following are a few examples of tales where the supernatural bridegroom is a bear. First, there is this version from Extremadura, titled *The Bear Prince* (*El príncipe oso*), collected by Sergio Hernández de Soto (Hernández de Soto, 1886: 118-121) and later translated into English (Spicer, 1971: 109). Second, there is this Germanic example documented by Ludwig Bechstein called *The Little Nut Twig* (*Das Nußzweiglein*) in which the girl’s father makes a deal with a bear (Bechstein, 1847: 81-85), and an English translation of the same (Bechstein, 1854: 17-22). And there are these Slavonic versions of ATU 425A in which the husband shows up as a bear: a Moravian version (Mikšiček, 1888: 214-220); a Slovenian version called *The Enchanted Bear and the Castle* (*Začaran grad in medved*) (Gabršček, 1894: 33-38) and a Slovakian tale titled *The Three Roses* (*Trojruža*), collected by Pavol Dobšinský (Dobšinský, 1881: 17-22). Finally, there is this Sardinian version recorded by Francesco Mango, *The Bear and the Three Sisters* (*S’urzu i is tres sorris*) in which the beast also appears in the form of a bear (Mango, 1885: 39-41).

<sup>16</sup> For discussion of the Basque term for ‘bear’ as well as further analysis of the Indo-European forms, cf. Frank (2017, 93-109).

rise eventually to the English word ‘bear’, linked etymologically to the English words ‘brown’ and ‘bruin’ (Glosecki, 1988; Praneuf, 1989: 28-32; Stitt, 1992). More specifically, according to the *OED*, the PIE etymon is *\*bher-*, ‘bright, brown’. It gave rise to the Old English form *bera*, and eventually to the Modern English word *bear*. The word ‘bruin’ is a cognate of this group, often used in English to refer not to the color ‘brown’ but rather to a ‘bear’, especially in children’s fables.

Among Eurasian and Native American peoples, the bear is often viewed as omniscient: the animal can hear all that is said by humans. For this reason, hunters would avoid mentioning the bear’s real name, choosing rather to address him/her with euphemisms, *noa* terms. At the same time, bears were viewed as ancestors and kin. With regard to the animal’s uncanny abilities, the Asiatic Eskimos, for example, held that during the festival of the slain bear, the bear’s shadow-soul could hear and understand the speech of humans, no matter where they were (Shepard & Sanders, 1992: 86). The Tlingit said, “People must always speak carefully of bear people since bears [no matter how far away] have the power to hear human speech. Even though a person murmurs a few careless words, the bear will take revenge” (Rockwell, 1991: 64). Analogous beliefs are found among the Ket, an Ugric-speaking people of Siberia with a rich tradition of bear worship, who believe that the bear is chief among animals, that beneath its skin is a being in human shape, divine in wisdom. For them, the bear was invested

with the capability of understanding the speech of all beasts as well as of man. Besides, they fancied that though the bear in summer was dull of hearing because of the rustling of leaves, in autumn or winter, however, it was a very dangerous to speak ill of the bear or to boast of successful bear hunting. ‘Should you speak badly of him one day or the other, and go hunting and find a good place, a bear will rise from behind a tree suddenly and grab you with his paw.’ (Alekseenko, 1968: 177)

Keeping these cross-cultural comparisons in mind, the most parsimonious explanation for why in times past, Germanic and Slavic speakers did not mention the bear’s real name would be that the practice stemmed from a similar set of beliefs in the powers of the bear which conveyed the same kind of reverence and awe for the animal itself. The use of euphemisms rather than the bear’s real name would dovetail with the patterns of avoidance associated with the animistic cosmology widely documented among forager populations. Consequently, the higher frequency of the portrayal of the supernatural husband as a bear in Germanic and Slavonic versions of ATU 425 might be traced back to this larger set of animist beliefs concerning bears.

### 3.2. Loss of recognition of the ursine coding

At some point the belief in the shapeshifting abilities of bears and humans was no longer accessible as a support mechanism for European storytellers and their audiences. As a result, the

most readily available explanation was for them to identify the animal husband with a class of reptiles that shed their skin. In contradistinction to the way that a lizard was recruited to explain the shapeshifting that takes place, we can turn to the interpretive frame embedded in Native American traditional tales. In them a common motif is a fluidity of being with bears becoming humans and vice-versa. In many of these tales, such as the well-known “Bear Mother tale,” it is a human female who marries or mates with a bear.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in these tales the mere act of a human putting on a bearskin can cause the human to transform into a bear. In other instances, removing the bear’s fur coat can permit the bear to take on the appearance of a human being (Barbeau, 1945; Bieder, 2006: 168-169; Rockwell, 1991: 116-121; Shepard & Sanders, 1992: 59-60).

In short, in these Native American tales putting on and taking off the bearskin coat is part and parcel of the blurring of the boundaries separating humans and bears, an indeterminacy of being linked to the animist relational ontology that operates in the background in which bears are portrayed as ancestors and kin. Keeping these Native American parallels in mind, we have the fact that among the tales listed under ATU 425A, the tale type called “The Search for the Lost Husband” or “The Animal as Bridegroom,” there are a number in which the bridegroom who takes off and puts on his coat is clearly a bear, e.g., “White Bear King Valemon”<sup>18</sup> and “East of the Sun and West of the Moon.”<sup>19</sup>

At no time in the story “El Castillo de Oropé” is the meaning of the term *hardacho* explicitly defined. Instead, the ability to fill in the contours of the character depends on the knowledge that the audience has of the regionalism *hardacho*, a term common to vocabulary of speakers in Soria. As has been stated, to make sense of the actions of the main character, having him put on and take off his skin and to shapeshift in the process, a lizard was chosen to play that role. That choice was intended to make sense of the shapeshifting that occurred. However, when snakes

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<sup>17</sup> The implications of the Bear Mother story have been addressed by Shepard & Sanders (1992: 59-60) while it has been retold and interpreted by many other investigators (Barbeau, 1945; Bieder, 2006; Deans, 1889; Edsman, 1956; Henderson, 2020; McClellan, 1970; Rockwell, 1991: 116-121). Although the central theme clearly continues to be the affirmation of the kinship between bears and humans, other aspects of the tale might not be as readily grasped. One of them is the fluidity of being implicit in the narrative. Edsman has discussed this feature with respect to Nordic tales, observing that earthly bears have a kind of dual nature. They are viewed as bears, but they have a spiritual dimension that links them to the ‘men of the forest’. In some instances, as among the Ainu, the bear cub, both before and after it is killed, is viewed as divine. After its death, the bear goes to join the “mountain men” (Edsman, 1956: 46; Hiroshi, 1992). A similar belief can be found among the Nivkh (Deláby, 1984). The suggestion is that there are two realms operating simultaneously. When spiritual dimension is highlighted, bears can take on the shape of human beings. But when they wander about in the forest, they appear to us merely as bears. However, in the latter case, their spiritual nature is not forgotten.

<sup>18</sup> For further discussion of “White Bear King Valemon” cf. Appendix 2. Reconnecting to Väinämöinen.

<sup>19</sup> For a partial listing of the tales belonging to ATU 425A, cf. [Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index | Fairy & Folk Tale Wiki | Fandom](#).

and lizards shed their skin, they don't transform into a totally different species of being. Consequently, even though the choice of a skin-shedding reptile was meant to explain the shapeshifting that took place, that choice was still incongruous in many respects because the animal was supposed to turn into the woman's lover. In short, the choice of a lizard lover posed problems.

In contrast, by introducing the tenets associated with the belief in ursine ancestors, it is not difficult to see that the shapeshifting of an animal husband fits into a narrative that does not differ significantly from the traditional stories extensively documented among Native Americans where bears and humans shapeshift. Moreover, there is the possibility that in the past storytellers and their audiences might have equated the husband with another familiar character, the Bear's Son who was a half-bear and half-human dual-natured being. The reasons for making this assumption will become clearer in the sections that follow. If this interpretation is correct, then the fur coat that the character takes off each night serves to reveal his human side and at the same time his dual nature. When his wife, urged on by her two sisters, tries to burn his coat and eliminate his 'animal' nature, he leaves her. And she must go off on a pilgrimage that in the end will bring about a reconciliation. Furthermore, it is obvious that her attempt to burn his fur coat is what causes him to leave. It is as if a basic premise of the ursine cosmology was being violated by her rejection of his innate dual nature and signally, by extension, the rejection of her own 'bearness'.

The assertion that originally the tale had an underlying theme related to the 'bearness' of the heroine requires further explication and will be treated in more depth in the sections that follow. For now, we can see that it would have rested on the belief that humans descended from bears and consequently that bears were both the ancestors of humans and their kin, a belief that, as has been noted, continued to circulate in the Pyrenean region to the north of Soria well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, we have the many examples of narrative traditions common among Native Americans where bears were also viewed as ancestors and kin. In those tales it is common for a character to show up as human at one point only to transform into a bear at some other juncture. This is also true of women who start out portrayed as humans but later shapeshift into bears or vice-versa.

## **4.0 Concerning Glass (Crystal) Mountain**

There is another motif found in "El Castillo de Oropé" that needs to be discussed in more depth for it acts to link this tale to many others and to an archaic belief that might once have formed an integral part of the animist relational ontology embraced by the storytellers and their audiences. I refer to the fact that the location, called here "El Castillo de Oropé," shows up in other folktales

connected to a place called Glass Mountain and referred to less frequently as Crystal Mountain. In other words, we can conclude that the castle in question was located atop Glass Mountain. It follows that the ‘iron boots’ that the supernatural husband gives to his wife before he leaves, are what allows the heroine to scale Glass Mountain. As noted in the story from Soria, only when her boots are worn out will she find her missing husband. Thus, the boots play a key role. Finally, as will be discussed shortly, the scene in which the heroine climbs Crystal/Glass Mountain seems to have gotten lost in more recent versions. In them, the notion of ‘crystal’ or the ‘glass’ of the mountain migrates. It gets reinterpreted and attaches itself to the shoes worn by the heroine, transforming them into the marvelous ‘glass slippers’ found in Perrault’s literary version of the tale (Cox, 1967 [1892]: 506-507).

Over many generations, the older versions of the story get reshaped and in the process the bear (or Bear’s Son) turns into a fully human ‘prince’. No longer does he take off and put on his fur coat. And the heroine’s prolonged search for her lost husband falls away. In addition, in versions where there is a gender reversal, now it is the prince who goes in search of a beautiful young woman, seeking to identify her based on the fit of a ‘glass slipper’. In short, she is no longer portrayed as an active agent, but increasingly as a helpless, submissive young woman, a passive character to whom things happen.<sup>20</sup> As Yolen (1982), Lieberman (1986a) and others have observed, in modern renditions of these tales it is the physical beauty attributed to the female character that attracts the attention of the dashing handsome young prince (Zipes, 1986b). Meanwhile, even in modern versions of the rags-to-riches tale, the portrayal of the two older sniping sisters seems to not to have changed much. In short, the features found in the more archaic versions of the story along with the motifs found in other European versions of the same tale type, such as “White Bear Valemon,” suggest that in much earlier narratives, the Cinderella that we all know, and love was once married to a bear-human.

As to the specific location where the bear husband is being held captive, concretely, Glass Mountain, the latter site is a motif that appears in many European folktales. However, there is evidence that earlier storytellers might well have assumed that members of their audience would have recognized the deeper symbolism attached to Glass Mountain for it is a location entangled

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<sup>20</sup> For further discussion of the transformation of the female character, cf. Zipes (1986a: 7) who writes the following: “In was only toward the end of the seventeenth century that Perrault began to transform the Cinderella protagonist into a passive and obedient young woman. His adaptation paved the way for the Grimms and numerous American authors who produced dainty and prudish Cinderellas *en masse* in the nineteenth century. The final result of this mass-market development was the Walt Disney film of 1949, which presented Cinderella in her most ‘perverted’ form—the patient, submissive, defenceless young woman, whose happiness depends on a man who actually defines her life.” Zipes is summarizing the research of Jean Yolen, a noted writer of children’s books. In her article “America’s Cinderella” Yolen analyzes what has happened to Cinderella in the mass-market popularizations of the story. Cf. Yolen (1982).

with folk beliefs about the human soul needing to climb to its top in order to reach Paradise (Cox, 1967 [1892]: 525, note 76; Grimm, 2012: 836). And if members of the audience were familiar with these beliefs, they might well have contextualized the heroine and her actions in a far different way than listeners do today. In times past, because of the profound meanings associated previously with the term Glass Mountain, the heroine's search for and success in climbing to the summit of this mountain would have been understood in a more other-worldly and transcendental fashion.

However, as Cox observes in her exhaustive study of the variants of "Cinderella": "In the folk-tales there is no distinct connection between the glass mountain and the abode of the dead" (Cox, 1967 [1892]: 525). Even though in her exhaustive study of the variants of "Cinderella" (ATU 510A) Cox did not identify explicit references to this location being the abode of the dead, Espinosa recorded a tale collected in Cuenca, Spain, called "El lagarto de siete camisas" ("The lizard of seven shirts") as well as a similar tale called "El Castillo de Irás y no Volverás" ((A. M. Espinosa, 1924: 267-271, 289-292). These two tales are clearly variants of "El Castillo de Oropé" (A. M. Espinosa, 1924: 260-264). In them the location of Glass Mountain shows up with the evocative and rather ominous name of "El Castillo de Irás y no Volverás," an expression which translates as "The Castle of Where You Will Go and Never Return." Hence, the name could be interpreted an allusion to the afterlife or simply as another way to emphasize the strange otherworldliness of the castle in question.

Allusions to the location of Glass Mountain and the castle that sits atop it also appear in tales that explicitly feature a bear-husband, namely, the tale "White Bear King Valemon" where the steep mountain is described and the difficulties that the heroine confronts in trying to scale it, a topic that will be treated in more depth in a later section of this study. Undoubtedly, the most well-known description of the location in question is found encapsulated in the title of the tale "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," a story in which the figure of the shapeshifting bear-human is also fully recognizable.

Without recognizing the ursine cosmology entrenched in this set of tales, Grimm brought together the following folk beliefs which appear to be intimately linked to this much earlier worldview. In his comments, we see that bear claws as well as those of a lynx were the implement of choice for those wishing to successfully scale this other-worldly mountain:

The Lithuanians bury or burn with the dead the *claws* of a *lynx* or *bear*, in the belief that the soul has to climb up a steep mountain, on which the divine judge (Kriwe Kriweito) sits: the rich will find it harder to scale than the poor, who are unburdened with property, unless their sins weigh them down. A wind wafts the poor sinners up as lightly as a feather, the rich have their limbs mangled by a dragon Wizunas, who dwells beneath the mountain, and are then carried up by tempests (Woycicki's Klechdy 2, 134-5. Narbutt 1, 284). The steep hill is called *Anafielas* by the Lithuanians, and *szklanna gora* (glass mountain) by the Poles, who think the

lost souls must climb it as a punishment, and when they have set foot on the summit, they slide off and tumble down. This *glass mountain* is still known to our German songs and fairytales, but no longer distinctly as an abode of the deceased, though the little maid who carries a huckle-bone to insert (like the bear's claw) into the glass mountain, and ends with cutting her little finger off that she may scale or unlock it at last, may be looked upon as seeking her lost brothers in the underworld (Kinderm. no. 25). (Grimm, 2012: 836)

Other tales point in the same direction: that in the earlier worldview whose characteristics were transmitted through these narratives, there was a location understood on at least three levels. First, it was viewed as an other-worldly destination, one that upon death the soul would encounter. Second, we see that this location was also where the bear-husband was held captive and, hence, a mountain that would be scaled, successfully, by the heroine with the help of her 'iron shoes' or perhaps earlier, her 'bear claws'. Finally, when reconstructing this archaic worldview, there is also evidence pointing to the possibility that in the past Glass Mountain was understood to be an actual physical location, a geographically concrete site located far to the west of the European continent, literally, at the "End of the Earth." In other words, there are indications that the mountain, although it eventually acquired mythological status, started out being associated with an actual place in the western extreme of Europe. Therefore, it would have represented the ultimate destination in the pilgrimage undertaken by the heroine (Dundes, 1995; Erdész, 1961; Frank, 2017b).

In contrast to the central role of the female protagonist in "El Castillo de Oropé," we find European versions of a tale type called "The Princess on the Glass Hill" that show another kind of gender reversal. In them, climbing Glass Mountain is a still predominant theme, but the main character is now a male and the reason for the ascent is to rescue a princess who is trapped there. However, even when the gender of the main character is changed, details from the older tale remain, e.g., that the heroine had to dress as a humble pilgrim, which would have involved donning sackcloth and ashes. For example, folklorists Johannes Bolte and Jiří Polívka (1913: 184-185)<sup>21</sup> as well as Marian Roalfe Cox named the main male character of this tale type *männlichen Aschenbrödel* (a male Cinderella), because the protagonist usually sleeps in the ashes, or plays in ashes and soot. After reading through various versions of "The Princess on the Glass Mountain" (ATU 530) Toomeos-Orglaan discovered approximately a dozen texts in which, similar to the tale of Cinderella (ATU 510A), the elder brothers, rather than the two stepsisters, throw peas into ashes and tell the youngest brother to pick these out and make a soup (Toomeos-Orglaan, 2013: 49-50).

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<sup>21</sup> For direct access to the text, cf. Digitale Volltext-Ausgabe bei Wikisource, URL: [https://de.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Seite:Grimms M%C3%A4rchen Anmerkungen \(Bolte Polivka\) I 184.jpg&oldid=-](https://de.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Seite:Grimms_M%C3%A4rchen_Anmerkungen_(Bolte_Polivka)_I_184.jpg&oldid=-) .

Alternatively, rather than sleeping in the ashes, the protagonist is often found at home sitting by the stove, in shabby and dirty clothes, and is often mocked by his family for this strange (and otherwise inexplicable) behaviour (Howitt & Howitt, 1852, Vol. 1, 223). And similar “to Cinderella [...] in the end the protagonist can be identified by a sign (a lost slipper, a ring broken in half). In both tales the main character initially has a socially low status (being poor, young) that will change after marrying a prince or a princess” (Toomeos-Orglaan, 2013: 49-50). In English translations of these tales the protagonist is commonly named Ashboy, Ashlad, Cinderface or some variation of them. While the overlap of motifs in ATU 530 and ATU 510A is patently obvious, the intrusion of motifs from ATU 301, ATU 302 and ATU 554 have not caught the attention of investigators. In summary, rather than a simple gender inversion having produced the narratives categorized as Male Cinderella tales, as we will soon see, something more complicated appears to have been going on in the process of retelling the story across the generations that allowed for this fusion of motifs.

Also, we need to keep in mind that the mountain which both the female heroine of “El Castillo de Oropé” and the Male Cinderella must scale is entangled with folk beliefs about the human soul needing to climb Glass Mountain in order to reach Paradise:

Compare also Dasent's "Princess on the Glass Hill." Stories of the princess on the glass mountain (as in Nos. 329, 332), or other inaccessible height (as in Nos. 319, 336, 341), recall the deliverance of Brunhild. The hall of flames of the Norse saga is the glass mountain which only a particular horse (Grani) can ascend, in the Danish ballad of Bryniel (*Altdanische Lieder und Märchen*, p. 31, and notes pp. 496, 497). For other examples of the glass mountain, cf. Bechstein, *Sagen*, p. 67; Campbell, iv, 295; *F.-L. Rec.*, iii, 225; *F.-L. Journal*, iii, 188; vi, 199; Grimm, Nos. 25 and *note*, 53, 93, 127; *Magyar Folk-Tales*, p. 59; Müllenhoff, p. 386-7; Thorpe, p. 86, "Princess on the Glass Mountain"; Vernaleken, pp. 50, 275 and *note*, 280, 289, 355; Zingerle, p. 239. Compare the belief that the soul in its wanderings has to climb a steep hill-side, sometimes supposed to be made of iron, sometimes of glass, on the summit of which is the heavenly Paradise. For this reason the nails of a corpse must never be pared. The Russians still carry about with them parings of an owl's claws, and of their own nails (see Ralston's *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 109-10).

The Lithuanians bury or burn with the dead the claws of a lynx or bear, in the belief that the soul has to climb up a steep mountain (Wojcicki, *Klechy*, ii, 134-5). In Vernaleken's "The Maiden on the Crystal Mountain" (from Lower Austria), the hero who keeps sliding backward when he attempts to climb the glass mountain, changes himself into a bear (by means of the hair given him by a grateful bear), and digs steps with his paws. When the splinters of glass lame him he changes himself into a wolf, and holds fast with his teeth. Finally he changes himself into a raven, and flies to the top. The steep hill is called *Anafielas* by the Lithuanians, and *Szklanna gora* (glass mountain) by the Poles. (Cox, 1967 [1892]: 525, note 76)

The geographical diffusion of the belief in Glass Mountain suggests that it is an element of significant antiquity and consequently that it constitutes an important component in the earlier worldview. It should not be considered merely a topographical feature that shows up randomly in folktales with no additional significance attached to it. Instead, for those who understood its



extended meanings, its presence in a story would have added context, colored the actions narrated and assigned a symbolic dimension to the actions of the main character, giving an additional dimension to the character who was attempting to climb to the summit. Furthermore, based on this worldview the soul of everyone, upon death, had to climb Glass Mountain to reach the heavenly Paradise. Consequently, there is a degree of reflexivity in the tales for the listener could understand the actions of the female protagonist as being in some fashion exemplary. And her ascent to Glass Mountain might awaken thoughts in the listener concerning the journey that the person's own soul would need to undertake in the afterlife. Stated differently, in times past the meaning of the journey undertaken by the heroine might well have been interpreted on different levels.

In summary, the motif of Glass Mountain manifests itself not only as a location in these folk narratives but also as an element shaping traditional beliefs that have to do with actual ritual practices. This implies that in times past the relationship between these social practices and the plot of the folktales was more accessible to storytellers and their audiences. The fact that the belief in a location called Glass Mountain or Crystal Mountain is geographically widespread across Europe appears to be evidence of the previous vitality of the larger belief matrix to which it still belongs. The geographical diffusion of the motif underlines its previous role in the interpretive framework utilized by those who listened to the stories. Indeed, there is reason to see it as a key element in this more overarching worldview.

Based on what has survived, the cosmovision had religious overtones. There was an implied understanding concerning what happened to one's soul in the afterlife. More concretely, implicit in this cosmovision was the belief that upon death everyone's soul had to undertake a kind of pilgrimage, a journey to the Otherworld, that required them to be able to scale Glass Mountain. And they needed to be properly equipped to be able to do so. Hence, the theme of being outfitted with bear claws comes into view, although it is not possible to determine whether this detail is a remnant of the belief that humans descended from bears and that somehow this fluidity of being also continued to exist even after death.

Returning to the tales themselves, in contrast to the central role of the heroine in "El Castillo de Oropé," we find European versions of a tale type called "The Princess on the Glass Hill" that show a gender reversal. These are tales that appear to have been built on the plot that we have been discussing in which the actions of the female character dominate. We also have seen that the much earlier frame of understanding was one that relied on an underlying ursine cosmology. As that interpretive framework faded away, another change would take place as storytellers retold the tale: the search for the lost husband would turn into a search and rescue operation for a

princess held captive on Glass Mountain. Her savior would be a valiant youth, who rises to the challenge and succeeds, often aided by a magic horse.<sup>22</sup>

Whereas climbing Glass Mountain is a still predominant motif, the main character is now a young man, often the youngest of three brothers, and the reason for the ascent is to rescue a princess who is trapped there. However, even when the gender of the main character is changed, remnants remain from the older tale. There are clearly details, i.e., references to ashes and soot, in the tales classified as ATU 530 and referred to as “The Princess on the Glass Hill” or “The Princess on Glass Mountain” that recall those found in “El Castillo de Oropé” where the heroine had to dress as a pilgrim and undertake a long journey that brought her to the castle on top of Glass Mountain.

In summary, the gender reversal found in “The Princess on Glass Mountain” with its male protagonist can be compared to the way that the role of the heroine protagonist of “El Castillo de Oropé” is recast in the Perrault’s version of the tale of “Cinderella.” The motif of ashes and soot is retained, but it is the prince who saves the poor little waif from a life of poverty and neglect and turns her into a princess. Quite obviously, these gender related aspects of the tale reflect modifications that slowly accrued over time as the tale passed from one storyteller to the next. But, once again, the key role played by the footwear of the female character continues to be integrated directly into the plot.

## **5.0 Notes on the Encoding of an Archaic Worldview: The Ursine Cosmology in European Folk Tales:**

In analyzing the two sets of tales discussed previously, we are confronted with the problem of reconstructing not only the earlier versions of the tales but, more importantly, the mindset or worldview of the audience at different points in time. And that problem requires recognizing that the reception of the tales—their interpretation and understanding—depends not so much on the words said, but on the preexisting cultural conceptualizations that guided the listener and allowed her to make sense of them. At the same time, when viewed diachronically, the cultural conceptualizations accessible to the teller of the tale at one point gradually become modified, quite inevitably, over time. The result is that certain elements of the stories are lost or reinterpreted while others are retained. And other new elements are added, again as part of the normal process of restructuring typical both of semantic change and the way that stories come to be reshaped over time, most especially when they are grounded only in orality. Across time, the

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<sup>22</sup> For a summary of these tales, cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Princess\\_on\\_the\\_Glass\\_Hill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Princess_on_the_Glass_Hill).

changing nature the dominant interpretive framework acts to highlight some elements of the tales while it can subtly obscure, erode and or even erase others.

These so-called extra-textual factors are key elements governing in the way that the stories are interpreted across time. They represent the conceptual frame through which the tales are processed by the listener. This means that elements of the plot keyed to an earlier interpretive framework can survive textually because of the way they are viewed as essential to the storyline itself. But they can become obscured in the mind of the listener when cultural conceptualizations that supported the overall interpretative frame begin to fall away. For instance, as mentioned, once the belief that humans descended from bears was no longer accessible to the storyteller and members of the audience, the hero is still portrayed as being dual-natured, a bear by day and a human by night. But this situation now needs to be justified by saying that he has been ‘enchanted’. More specifically, his dual nature is explained away by having the storyteller add that the hero is bewitched. In some instances, the shapeshifting is because he has been put under a spell by an evil witch or troll-hag (Swahn, 1955: 207).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in the case of the heroine, there is the possibility that she has forgotten her own ‘bearness’ and only recovers it as she successfully scales Glass Mountain, for example, using the ‘iron claws’ mentioned in one version of the tale, namely, in the Norwegian story “White Bear King Valemon” (“Kvitebjørn Kong Valemon”).

The Norwegian tale has what is the most graphic account of the heroine’s encounter with Glass Mountain, even though the mountain itself is not referred to by this name. In the tale, the heroine appears as the daughter of a king who becomes involved with a white bear. In this instance, her male consort is from the very beginning identified as a bear. However, he is also a king, fitted out with a marvelous castle. And rather than being anonymous, he has a name, Valemon.<sup>24</sup> As in other versions of the tale, the female character lets drops of wax fall on her husband and the result is that he takes off, leaving her having to go search for him. Wandering through the forest, she comes upon one hut after another and from each of them, receives: a magic object, a pair of golden scissors and wherever the scissors were, clothes were never

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<sup>23</sup> Although not identical, the reasons given are always intended to explain “how the animal husband met his evil fate,” as Swahn phrases it (1955: 207). And, consequently, are buttressed by the assumption that being turned into an animal is a kind of punishment, again, an interpretation based on the human-animal dichotomy and the notion of an inherent human exceptionalism. Swahn goes on to say that usually we are told that a witch changed the man into an animal because he did not wish to marry her. However, the witch’s anger can also have been aroused for other reasons, such as because a man-servant has been too friendly to her maid-servant, or we have a disobedient son being enchanted because of his mother’s rash desire. And then there is “the motif, especially well known from the literary French tales, of the fairy who had not been invited to a christening” (Swahn, 1955: 207).

<sup>24</sup> The convoluted origins of the different name assigned to the male character in variants of this Norwegian tale and their possible connections to the Finnish demigod Väinämöinen are treated in Appendix 2 of this study.

lacking; next a flask that provides endless drink; and finally, a magic tablecloth that serves up sumptuous quantities of food.

After receiving the last gift, she sets off again, travelling through the forest all day and all night. In the morning she comes to a mountain spur which is as steep as a wall, and so high and wide that she can see no end. Here is another cottage and as she did at the other cottages, she asks if the woman of the house has seen King Valemon pass by, and once again the response is in the affirmative. But this time around the woman adds that after he passed by, he went up the mountain, adding that nothing can get up there that is wingless, thus, emphasizing the impossibility of the task of scaling it. However, no explanation is given for why the White Bear Valemon had had no difficulty climbing up.

After the heroine gives the hungry family ample food and drink, using her magic flask and tablecloth, she sets about making clothing for the children with her magic scissors. In a show of gratitude, the woman tells her that her husband is a master smith and when he comes back, “I’ll get him to forge claws for your hands and feet, and then you can try to crawl up” (Asbjørnsen & Moe, 1989: 119).<sup>25</sup> The text continues with an elaborate description of the heroine climbing Glass Mountain and reaching the castle of the Troll-Hag where preparations were underway for the wedding:

When the smith came, he started on the claws right away, and the next morning they were ready. She had no time to wait, but said her thanks, fastened the claws to her hands and feet and crept and crawled up the mountainside the whole day and night, and, just when she was so tired that she didn’t think she could lift her hand again, but felt she would sink to the ground, she got to the top. There was a plain, with fields and meadows so big and wide that she had never imagined anything so broad and smooth, and close by there was a castle filled with workers of every kind [...]” (Asbjørnsen & Moe, 1989: 119).

At this juncture, we might ask why in this tale the iron shoes found in other versions of the tale are replaced by iron claws which the heroine wears on both her hands and her feet. I see two possibilities. The first is simply that at some point it occurred to the storyteller to add this detail, motivated perhaps by the fact that the story features a bear, an animal who most definitely is equipped with some spectacular claws on its hands and feet. In the real world these claws allow bears to perform feats that are difficult if not impossible for a mere human to accomplish, whether quickly climbing up a tree or navigating steep snow-covered slopes, icy locations bears often chose for their dens.

Hence, equipping the heroine with claws might have seemed like a logical addition to the narrative. And since there is a theme of gratitude running through the plot, having the heroine

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<sup>25</sup> The Norwegian original is available online: <http://runeberg.org/folkeven/093.html>.

rewarded with claws for her having helped to feed and clothe the poor family might have seemed fitting. In any case, the insertion of claws into the narrative also would have led the members of the audience to imagine the heroine, digging in her claws, bear-like, as she climbed up the steep mountainside. Indeed, the members of the audience might have realized that this was not ordinary mountain, but rather Glass Mountain. If so, then they also could have imagined the heroine as transformed, at least partially, into a bear herself. The second possibility requires contemplating the possibility that in earlier versions of the tale, the motif of Glass Mountain was more explicit as well as the theme of beariness and, hence, the notion of shapeshifting from human to bear and vice-versa. In short, portraying the heroine with claws on her hands and feet could have been a further indication to the members of the audience of her acceptance of her own innate beariness.

To summarize, if we consider tales such as “El Castillo de Oropé” and “White Bear King Valemon” in the *longue durée*, that is, foregrounding the possible diachronic axis of tale type ATU 425A, they become multivalent texts whose interpretation depends on the worldview shared by the storyteller and the audience. That the initiation of young women into ‘bearness’ was perceived as a motif depends on whether the members of the audience were primed to interpret the text in this way because they already embraced an animist relational ontology in which bears were viewed as ancestors and kin. Whereas to allege that implicit in the tale was the notion of the initiation of the heroine, her becoming a bear, might seem far-fetched, such initiation ceremonies are well documented in cultural settings where bear ceremonialism is and was practiced, e.g., among certain Native American tribes. In the case of Europe, things are not so clear. However, there are hints that in the past becoming a woman was analogized to achieving bearhood.

## 6.0 The Ursine Genealogy and Female Initiation Ceremonies

As we soon shall see, in societies where the bear was an animal—and an ancestral figure—held in high esteem, the relationship holding between the bear and blood becomes quite complex, most particularly when we turn to the puberty rites of Native Americans and even those of at least some Europeans. According to Rockwell, “[a]s with puberty rites, the initiation of an adult into a secret society centered on the symbolism of death and birth, and the bear played a role there too” (Rockwell, 1991: 18). The theme of death and resurrection is correlated with the remarkable ability of bears to go into their dens in the fall, spend up six months without drinking, eating or defecating and emerge in the Spring, alive and well, albeit slimmed down, and even often with bear cubs in tow. Undoubtedly, this amazing ability caught the attention of humans who in contrast had to struggle to feed themselves through the harsh winter months. Witnessing

the apparent death and resurrection of the bear year after year must have left a deep impression on the humans who shared the same habitat, living off the same resources, but unable to pass the winter months of scarcity in the same way, comfortably snuggled into a bed of spruce boughs and moss, moreover, without needing to concern themselves with laying up a food supply ahead of time. And the same was true of the young cubs who during their first two or three years of life would den with their mother. There was no concern on her part with setting aside a supply of winter food for them or herself. In short, humans would have noticed that bears never bothered to fill their pantry for winter as chipmunks, ground squirrels and some other hibernating mammals seem to do. Hence, the theme of death, birth and renewal was linked to bears. And by extension to puberty rites what marked the transition to a new stage of life.

A lesser-known aspect of women's initiation rites concerns the intimate relationship between menses and bear ancestors, as documented among Native Americans:

Many tribes immediately isolated girls at the initial signs of their first menses, so that they would not injure or contaminate others with their strong and potentially dangerous powers. In most Indian societies the bulk of a girl's and a woman's life was spent in group activities—gathering, child rearing, fishing, or doing an assortment of other domestic, but collective activities. Her seclusion at the time of her first menses was often the only time in her entire life when she was alone and isolated from family and community for any length of time.

Usually girls remained isolated in small huts set apart from their village for anywhere from four days to a month or even longer. A Tlingit girl could remain isolated for an entire year. During her seclusion, she observed a number of taboos: she fasted or ate only certain foods; she drank water through a reed or hollow bone; and, often, she was not permitted to scratch herself with her fingernails. Elder women of her village visited her and taught her secret stories and ceremonies. (Rockwell, 1991: 16)

Rockwell continues, explaining that

An Ojibwa girl about to start her first menstrual period was called *wemukowe*, which means “going to be a bear.” At the first sign of her blood she smeared soot around her eyes and put on her poorest clothes. Her mother or grandmother rushed her out of the village to a tiny hut hidden in the forest. As they slipped away along a path where they were unlikely to meet anyone, the girl looked only at the ground and touched nothing. The Ojibwa believed her powers to be so great that her glance or touch could bring paralysis to another, death to a child, or the destruction of the year's berry crop. At the hut, the girl crawled inside. Her mother closed the entrance and returned to the family lodge. During her seclusion, the girl's relatives called her *mukowe*—literally “she is a bear.” (Rockwell, 1991: 16)

At this juncture, special knowledge is transmitted to the female initiate as she enters womanhood:

She sat quietly within her hut. When she went outside to stretch her legs or relieve herself, she scattered leaves along her path to warn others of her presence. At some point, an elder woman from camp, who was past menopause and no longer susceptible to the girl's power, came to visit, bringing buckskin, quills, and sewing materials. Together, the two sewed and talked. The woman revealed mysteries and told stories that

only women knew. She spoke about what it meant to be a woman, about child-bearing, and about men. (Rockwell, 1991: 16)

Next, we find that

After her bleeding stopped, the girl went to a stream and washed herself. Then she returned to her hut and remained in seclusion until an appointed time. When, finally, she went back to her family, her initiation continued with a series of less dramatic ceremonies. These seasonal rituals, conducted by her mother and grandmother, took place over the course of a year and were often attended by aunts and other elder women of the village. At their conclusion, dietary and other taboos were lifted and the girl resumed a normal life. She was considered a woman now and eligible for marriage... In this initiation rite, and others like it, the people associated girls with bears even though there was no direct imitation. Relatives and others identified them with bears partly because their initiation ritual resembled hibernation: they disappeared alone into a den-like hut. But the association went beyond that. For the Ojibwa and most other American Indians, menstruating women represented a serious danger to the community, as did bears. The bear in this case was not only a symbol of initiation but also a symbol of the maleficent powers of the menstruating woman. (Rockwell, 1991: 16-17)

In summary, we may say that, semantically speaking, the onset of the first menses stood for the transition of the young woman into adulthood and that, as key part of that initiation ritual, she was conceptualized as turning into a bear. Here we need to keep in mind that from the perspective of a worldview where the humans descend from bears, it would be logical for such a transformation to be understood conceptually as “becoming a bear.” In short, in the case of the Ojibwa the transition of the young girl into adulthood was equated with her becoming a bear and exteriorized linguistically, initially, by means the expression: *wemukwe* “going to be a bear.” Thus, when she “became a woman,” she simultaneously “became a bear.”

During her seclusion, her relatives called her *mukowe*, literally “she is a bear.” The fusion of the menses with beariness is written into the words themselves. For the Ojibwa the rich field of related beliefs connected to the bear allows the meaning of the young girl’s initiation ritual along with the terms *wemukowe* and *mukowe* to be fully understood. If, on the other hand, we were dealing with a culture in which the sacredness of the bear had undergone erosion or been lost entirely because of many millennia of contact with anthropocentric belief systems, such as Christianity, it would be quite perplexing to find an expression like *mukowe* “she is a bear” used in reference to initiation ceremonies marking the onset of menstruation.<sup>26</sup>

As will soon become evident, in Europe there are still a few remnants of cultural conceptualizations that run parallel to those outlined above for the Ojibwa people of North America. These cultural conceptualizations indicate that a young woman’s initiation into womanhood was once framed by her first menses and understood as her ‘becoming a bear’. Even today in modern day eastern Lithuania, we find that a woman was called a ‘bear’, but not upon

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<sup>26</sup> Rockwell’s source for this material is Barnouw (1977).

the onset of menstruation. Rather this happened after she gave birth. The ritualization of this and other transitional moments in a woman's life took place inside the confines of a sauna:

Lithuanian saunas were the traditional place for women's rites. In the sauna they would perform a bathing ritual for the bride. In this way she was introduced into the women's community. This action would finish with a ritual meal and drinks.

In eastern Lithuania a woman was called "Bear" immediately after child-birth. "The Bear is coming!" women would shout as she approached the sauna for ritual bathing about five weeks after giving birth. After bathing the new mother would make offerings to the Birth Goddess Laima. (Esser et al., 2001: 21)

With respect to calling the new mother a 'bear' we see that offerings were also made to the birth goddess known as Laima. Furthermore, as noted earlier, although there is no mention of a girl being called a 'bear' upon the onset of her first menses, that event, nonetheless, was highly ritualized in Lithuania:

An example of a girl's initiation into womanhood was documented in written form at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When the mother noticed that her daughter was bleeding for the first time she showed the blood to her daughter and asked "What do you have here?" and without waiting for an answer slapped her cheek with her palm. From this moment the daughter assumed a higher position in the family and could sit at table [sic] with adult members of the family.

Understanding the importance of woman's initiation, we now mark with girls the day of the ending of her childhood and the birth of a fertile female body. On this day our daughter or another girl is invited into the women's circle where she sits covered by a white cloth in the middle of the singing and dancing circle. Later she is crowned with a wreath of roses and given small fine gifts by her mother and other women. The celebration finishes with a feast, open talking about women's sexuality and fertility, and answering the girl's questions. (Esser et al., 2001: 21-22)

Before concluding this discussion of ritual initiation of women into bearhood, we should also remember that it is in Lithuania where the belief was documented concerning the soul having to climb Crystal Mountain and where the associated custom of burying or burning the dead along with the claws of a bear or a lynx survived. And that custom was based on the belief that these instruments would aid the soul of those who, on the final day of judgement, would find themselves forced to climb up this steep mountain. In short, although the evidence is fragmentary, when combined with the two sets of tales analyzed in this essay, the actions of the heroine of "The Castle of Oropé" take on a new meaning, concretely, her initial unwillingness to accept the dual-nature of her husband and consequently her own dual-nature. Her pilgrimage and eventual success in climbing Crystal Mountain, aided, at least in some versions, by her bear-like 'claws', suggest a reconciliation not only with the male protagonist, but also with her own double-natured soul.

Whereas the discussion above has focused on Lithuania, it is also well known that in Europe, further to the south, we find references to the young disciples of the Goddess Artemis



dressing in clothing symbolizing bearskins which, according to Gimbutas, is only one aspect that has remained from this earlier bear cult (1982: 199-200). “Well-bred Athenian girls of marriageable age danced as bears in honour of Artemis of Brauronia, and during rites of cult-initiation girls ‘became’ bears, *arktoi*” (Gimbutas, 1982: 198-199). The girls, between the age of five and ten years of age, called *arktoi* (“bears”), danced at the temple of Brauron dedicated to the goddess Artemis, a few miles southwest of Athens. Other authors have suggested that the age of the participants ranged from eight or ten to fourteen or fifteen (Hughes, 1990: 118, note 54; Kahil, 1976: 126; Perlman, 1989: 118). In any case, Artemis appears to have presided over rituals marking the transition and transformation of females from puberty to the first childbirth. Although it is difficult to determine the precise range of ages that should be assigned to the participants in the rituals, the first known temple at the sanctuary site of Brauron itself dates to the late 6th century BC.

Other researchers have underlined the linkages between Artemis and bears; that she was the goddess of childbirth, child raising and the induction of children into adolescence and adulthood. According to Gimbutas, as “the Bear-Mother she nursed, reared and protected the newly born with the pietas maternal of a bear” (1982: 199). In this respect, Artemis often has also been viewed as the counterpart of the Celtic goddess Artio, whose name means ‘bear’ in Celtic languages (Sjöblom, 2006: 71-78). At the same time, Artemis has been portrayed as the “Mistress of Animals,” since her cult was connected to the wilderness, hunting and showing respect for wild animals (Hughes, 1990: 191-196).

The precise nature and meaning of the rites of initiation for the girls and young women at Brauronia continue to be debated, including whether the initiation once included having the initiates put on actual bearskins or their symbolic equivalent (Blundell & Williamson, 1998: 205-210; Green, 1998: 217-218). While that point is unclear, in vase painting the worshippers of Artemis are portrayed wearing animal masks while the masks themselves have been interpreted as being linked to the initiation into bearhood of the young women (Hughes, 1990: 195). A dance called *arketeia* is represented in these classical vase paintings, “and its slow, solemn steps, with movements imitating those of bears, can be imagined. By dressing and moving like bears, the *arktoi* heightened their sense of identification with the animal” (Hughes, 1990: 195).

As for the antiquity of the cult itself, according to Hughes (1990: 195), there is “archaeological evidence of the bear cult at Brauron from the eighth century BC, although it could be older. The site was a flourishing center far back in the Neolithic and Mycenaean periods.” Hughes even suggests that earlier real bearskins played a role in the rituals performed at the Brauronia site:

In the initiation, the goddess, the children and the bear were “considered to be as of one nature and called by the same name.” Artemis was worshipped as the Great-She-Bear and the girls became her images, *arktoi*, sometimes wearing bear masks. In the earliest days of the Bauronian festival, the girls were no doubt clothed in bearskin robes, but by the fifth century bears were rare in Attica and the *krokoton* (a short, saffron-yellow chiton), replaced the furs, but continued to symbolize the bearskin.” (Hughes, 1990: 195)

The following comment found in Bonnet-Carbonell (1988) brings into clearer focus our central concern: the nature of the relationship between “becoming a bear” and the first menstruation of a young woman, more concretely, whether in Europe there is evidence that the first menses were treated ritually: “Le caractère sacré des premières menstrues trouve son expression dans l'offrande par ces vierges grecques de leur premier linge menstruel à Artémis Braurônia” [“The sacred character of the first menses finds its expression in the offering by the Greek virgins (young women) of their menstrual cloth to Artemis Brauronia”].<sup>27</sup>

Another memory trace of what appears to have been the ritualized nature of such initiation ceremonies might be an expression found in French. When a young woman gets her period, it is referred to colloquially as *avoir l'ourse*, literally, “to have the bear (a female bear)” as well as *avoir l'ours*, “to have a male bear” (Bailly, 1947: 375; Imbs, 1799-1960, Vol 12, 715).<sup>28</sup> Hence, at some point in the past speakers must have sensed a relationship between a ‘bear’ and ‘menses’: that the two concepts occupied a shared semantic space within the preexisting cultural order. Moreover, although at present we have not identified evidence concerning female initiation rituals in the case of France or the Pyrenean region, that there once was more to this colloquial expression than meets the eye today seems self-evident.

At this juncture, in the Pyrenean region there is no ethnographic data pointing to the existence of rites of passage focused on young women when they began to menstruate. However, the French expression suggests that further research might allow us to gain a better purchase of its original socio-cultural grounding. In short, although evidence is sparse, there is enough to entertain the possibility that at some point in the past Europeans viewed the onset of menstruation as a rite of passage into bearhood and that this transition was marked by female initiation rituals and, consequently, not just in the case of women who belonged to the Artemis cult as has been assumed until now (Lanciano & Tutino, 2005).

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<sup>27</sup> Bonnet gives as her source Jeanmaire (1970: 209).

<sup>28</sup> Today one frequently finds the expression used in the plural, *avoir ses ourses*, i.e., “to have one’s bears (female),” perhaps through analogy to other expressions such as to have *ses mois* (“one’s months”), *ses jours* (“one’s days”), *ses lunes* (“one’s moons”); and *ses périodes* (“one’s periods”). Also, it should be noted that *avoir l'ours* (“male bear”) or *avoir ses ours* are also in use. The latter expressions seem to have been motivated by the assumption that the expression refers to the woman being out of humor, grouchy like a ‘bear’ when she is having her period. And that analogy, in turn, is said to rest conceptually on the use of a masculine representation for the grouchy bear.

Across Europe there are many examples of the fusion of the older ursine belief system with Christianity. The result was a syncretistic compromise that provided continuity between the older and newer worldviews. The fusion of the old with new also allowed remnants of the earlier cultural layer to survive, and in turn, to offer us a means to understand, albeit imperfectly, how a given cult site came to be chosen. For instance, on the isle of Crete, “[I]n the cave of Acrotiri near ancient Kydonia, a festival in honour of Panagia (Mary) Arkoudiotissa ('she of the bear') is celebrated on the second day of February” (Gimbutas, 1982: 200; Thomson, 1962). And, although this date is known in the Christian calendar as Candlemas, its older name is Bear Day, the day that the bear supposedly left its den and checked its shadow, a date that is commemorated by bear festivals in the Pyrenees still today (Frank, 2001, 2017a, in prep.).

**Figure 6.** Arkoudiotissa Cave, Akrotiri (Crete). Ruins in front of the cave. Source: By Wolfgang Sauber - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6647110>.



An online tourist brochure describes the location in Crete in more detail and gives us a synopsis of the pious legend that evidently grew up around the site: the story offers worshippers an explanation, albeit a bit lame, for why a (pagan) site oriented around a stalagmite shaped more or less like a bear, came to be venerated by Christians; and more particularly why the cave ended up being dedicated to the Virgin Mary of the Bear (Arkoudiotissa):

On your way [to the Katholiko Monastery] you pass by the Bear Cave, in which there is a big stalagmite, which—if you stretch your imagination—resembles a bear bending over the cistern situated in the cave. According to tradition a living bear was originally drinking from the water. The monks from Gouvernetou Monastery and the local inhabitants had never seen it, but because they wondered, why the cistern was

always empty, some of the monks decided to keep watch inside the cave to find the reason. They were terrified, when suddenly the big bear darkened the entrance, and one of them quickly invoked the Virgin Mary. He had hardly finished his prayer, when the bear became petrified. And there it still stands to this very day. (Kretakultur.dk, 2006)



**Figure 7.** Arkoudiotissa, Akrotiri ( Crete ). Stalagmite in form of a bear combined with an ancient altar.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arkoudiotissa\\_-\\_Steinerner\\_B%C3%A4r\\_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arkoudiotissa_-_Steinerner_B%C3%A4r_1.jpg).

Consequently, to fully comprehend the significance of the Bear Goddess discussed by Gimbutas, we need to reach back in time and move beyond the Neolithic agricultural worldview, beyond pastoral economies. Only then is it possible to retrieve the much earlier animist vision where earthly bears, the animals themselves and their spiritual counterparts, were objects of veneration. In cultural settings where bear ceremonialism has flourished, “the Bear is not only an animal, but also a spirit: in this last quality, it stands above man: a semi-divinity, higher than all other spirits” (Barbeau, 1945: 1). However, rather than following Shepard and others who have researched bear ceremonialism among hunter-gatherer cultures, Gimbutas sticks by her matriarchy position, arguing, “[t]he “maternal devotion of the female bear made such an impression upon Old European peasants that she was adopted as a symbol of motherhood” (Gimbutas, 1982: 195). To test the validity of the argument made by Gimbutas concerning the maternal devotion of sow bears (as female bears are called), we might begin by pondering exactly how much exposure the average European peasant woman had to lactating bears while tending her flock of sheep, cattle or goats and whether they viewed those large furry creatures favorably. Or, conversely, we might to ask whether it might not be more logical to seek a deeper

time-depth for the ultimate origins of this association of maternal devotion with that of bear mothers.

As to how one might best characterize the actions of a female bear with cubs, most would say that she is a ferocious foe, determined to protect her offspring at any cost and willing to confront any animal, even a male bear much larger and heavier than herself. At the same time, bear mothers take good care of their young, teach them and reprimand them when they misbehave. Moreover, in cultures where humans are in close contact with bears living in the wild, the figure of the bear mother is an ambiguous one, characterized by a mixture of fear and profound respect (Barbeau, 1945; Shepard, 1999, 2007; Shepard and Sanders, 1992).

In other words, rather than thinking that human females went looking for a symbol of their own motherhood, I believe we are talking about a much older cosmology, one that antedates the arrival of agriculture and assigned to bears a special role: that they were the ancestors of human beings. That worldview highlighted the special attributes of female bears, their miraculous ability to hibernate for months and yet reappear as if resurrected in the springtime accompanied by one, two or three rambunctious cubs. At the same time, their anatomical similarity to humans as well as their remarkable intelligence would not have been missed. While the ursine cosmology itself derives from a hunter-gatherer mentality, we also should remember that there are ample examples of bear figurines dating from the Neolithic.

In the cave of Acrotiri near ancient Kydonia, a festival in honor of Panagia (Mary) Arkoudiotissa ('she of the bear') is celebrated on the second day of February, the day which is known in much of Europe as Candlemas, its Christian name, but, as has been noted, in other parts of Europe it is still recognized as Bear Day. In various parts of Europe still today performances take place that mimic bear hunts, such as the Pyrenean *fêtes de l'ours*. These are held in conjunction with other boisterous and often bizarre festivities. Then there is the pan-European folk belief concerning February 2nd. That morning is when the bear is said to peer out of its lair to determine the beginning date of spring, a solar interpretation of a ritual linked to a much earlier luni-solar calendar. The belief might date back to an even more ancient ritual practice involving not a bear, but a human calendar-keeper, perhaps understood to be a bear shaman (Frank, 2001; Lebeuf, 1987).<sup>29</sup> In summary, the bear was apparently a central figure in

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<sup>29</sup> Most Americans are not familiar with the rich carnival traditions of Europe, much less Candlemas Bear Day activities. Rather they only know about a solar tradition with a much more limited scope, that of Ground Hog Day: In the traditional weather lore of the United States, if a groundhog emerges from its burrow on February 2nd and fails to see its shadow because the sky is cloudy, this means winter will soon end. If the groundhog sees its shadow because the sky is bright and clear, it will be frightened and run back into its hole, and the winter will continue for six more weeks (Capper, 2016; Wikipedia, 2006; Yoder, 2003). The tradition entered the U.S. with the Pennsylvania Dutch settlers. For additional analysis of the role of the bear in Candlemas/Bear Day, cf. Frank (2001, 2017a).

the cosmology of forager groups inhabiting Europe in times past. And aspects of that archaic worldview continue to resonate in the two sets of tales discussed in this essay, namely, the Bear's Son tales and the cycle of tales belonging to the same lineage as "The Castle of Oropé", i.e., ATU 425A.

To summarize, when the ursine aspects of these two sets of folktales are contextualized using ethnographic evidence, we see that in Europe, too, the initiation of young women into adulthood was marked by puberty rites and the onset of menses, while the act of becoming a mother was analogized to "becoming a bear." Furthermore, it appears that these ursine informed rituals and traditions emanated from an older animist relational ontology that recalls the one documented among Native Americans. In addition, research into the rites of Artemis suggests that when young women were initiated, they were viewed as "becoming bears" (Shepard & Sanders, 1992: 113-120). That the Artemis initiates wore bear accoutrements and that Artemis herself was connected to an ancient pan-European bear cult has been discussed many times (Bevan, 1987; Hughes, 1990; Léger, 2015; Sjöblom, 2006). What has not been done previously is to integrate these marginal folk beliefs as well as the research that has been done on Artemis into an overarching interpretative framework and apply it to our understanding of these two sets of folktales.

## 7.0 Identifying the Foundational Elements of the Ethnocultural Substrate

When analyzing these two sets of tales, one of the challenges has been identifying and reconstructing the elements making up the ethnocultural substrate that resides, latently, in the tales themselves. This requires keeping in mind that over time the tales have been subject to amalgamation, reshaping and adjustment, all of which tended to make them conform more closely to the constantly evolving framework of understandings of both the teller and his/her audience. At the same time, there is a countervailing force which—until recently—has also operated: the need for the storyteller to be faithful to the earlier version of the tale. Frog (2011), speaking of "traditions" rather than specific tales and myths, states the following concerning the process by which these "dynamic mental models" operate. He begins his discussion by citing the work of Harvilahti which is pertinent to our discussion:

Lauri Harvilahti (2003: 90-115) has used the term *ethnocultural substrate* or *ethnocultural substratum* to refer to "archaic features long preserved in a tradition" (2003: 91). These features include poetic diction, prosody, melody and music, modes of performance, images, motifs, traditional meanings, concepts, patterns of social practice, and so forth. "These form a concise whole, used in different genres and actualized on different occasions, and in some cases revitalized in favourable cultural situations. The ethnocultural substrates serve as dynamic mental models for forming a network of fundamental elements of the ethnocultural characteristics of particular traditions" (Harvilahti, 2003: 91). (Frog, 2011: 23-24)



Frog goes on to explain how the term ethnocultural substrate or ethnocultural substratum relates to the notion of traditions:

Traditions, whether inherited or borrowed, always emerge in a present filtered through the semiotics and cognitive models of the contemporary culture. This ongoing historical process functions on the level of small-group communities and networks of such communities in interaction. The fundamental elements filtered through this process are internalized to form the “dynamic mental models” (Harvilahti 2003: 91) that provide the foundations for shared meanings. They may be described as the elements constitutive of cultural competence. (Frog, 2011: 24)

At any point in time the “shared meanings” of the community of speakers in question provides the interpretative framework for the listener (or reader). However, these cultural conceptualizations are themselves entities that have a diachronic axis (Frank, 2005, 2008b, 2014). Older elements can intermingle and fuse with newer ones. They do not necessarily disappear entirely from view. For this reason, the notion of ethnocultural substrata—in the plural—is useful as long as that notion is understood as being composed of a dynamic network of concepts, some more interconnected and hence more resistant to change than others. However, one needs to be careful about applying an archaeological analogy to the processes and the results of these processes of cognitive reinterpretation for that model can imply that the ‘layers’ are discrete entities, separate and distinct, stacked neatly one on top of the other.

Frog speaks of the inappropriateness of transferring the concept of ‘layer’ to the complex processes that give rise to the cultural conceptualizations held by members of a community at any given point in time:

As an essential feature of every cultural environment, an ethnocultural substratum can be postulated for every preceding cultural period. The term ‘substratum’ employs a metaphor of ‘layers’. Each layer is constituted of the inherited “network of fundamental elements” (Harvilahti 2003: 91) filtered through the semiotics and cognitive models of the contemporary culture that together form the dynamic mental models constitutive of cultural competence. The term ‘ethnocultural substratum’ is preferable to ‘layer’ because it emphasizes a synchronic totality into which preceding substrata of earlier periods have been assimilated and filtered (giving rise to continuities) rather than isolating elements associated with each period and ascribing these to different ‘layers’. (Frog, 2011: 24-25)

For modern-day readers it is difficult to conceive of the role once played by these tales in the formation, transmission and reinforcement of this much older worldview in which human animals and other-than-human animals not only lived together but lent mutual support to each other. Furthermore, today the idea that humans descended from bears places the reader on a totally unfamiliar terrain, leading, as we have seen, to the hero being portrayed as under a spell. In this respect, the following comments by Frog are relevant:

The reflections of earlier substrata in any present are, however, the outcome of the diachronic processes and filtered through any intermediate substrata. Continuities implicitly indicate discontinuities: even when the

cultural element has remained unchanged, its significance and functions are shaped in relation to a present environment. Within these processes, the forms, contents and applications of elements exhibiting continuity may therefore have undergone radical adaptations and revaluations in the process of maintaining currency and relevance as a historical process. (Frog, 2011: 25)

The complexity of this process of restructuring the text and its interpretative framework(s) is summarized in this fashion by Frog:

Ethnocultural substrata are phenomena of a present which connect with the past. As a historical process, substrata are not simply a sequence of layers stacked up on top of one another: each ethnocultural substratum filters that which precedes it, hence it is always a present whole. Connections to the past within that present (whether perceived or presumed) may not reflect historical realities or even be consistent with those of the preceding substratum. Elements of the preceding substratum must find relevance in changing historical and environmental circumstances or they atrophy and disappear. Networks of elements develop internally within a substratum as a historical process and external elements are assimilated from outside it. Nevertheless, the sequential assimilation of earlier substrata allows continuities in which earlier periods (and even several simultaneously) may be reflected. (Frog, 2011: 25)

This approach emphasizes the need to pay attention to the diachronic dimension of the folktales, even though that is only possible when developmentally earlier versions of the tales and their interpretative frameworks become available. For example, until now, investigators have compared hundreds of versions in which the heroine appears as Cinderella or an avatar of the same (Cox, 1967 [1892]; Delarue, 1982). Yet, to my knowledge, no one has recognized the fact that this set of tales harkens back to a much earlier template. In that model the heroine is portrayed not as a rather pathetic creature who magically is changed into a princess and passively wins the hand of her prince, but rather as the woman who sets off on her own seeking to find and eventually free her husband who is held captive by another powerful female character.

As has been noted, even though the plot of the Cinderella tales differs significantly from what we find in “El Castillo de Oropé”, there are elements that overlap, one of the most obvious being the role played by the shoes worn by each character. The motif of Crystal Mountain, that is, the concept of ‘crystal’ or ‘glass’, provides the trigger for transforming the ‘iron shoes’ and elevating their status. For instance, in one New World version of the tale they show up as ‘chapincitos de oro’ (‘little golden shoes’), ‘chapines’ being a type of high-platformed footwear preferred by members of the Spanish aristocracy (J. M. Espinosa, 1937: 29-31).<sup>30</sup> In

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<sup>30</sup> These ‘chapines’ were a kind of footwear worn by women belonging to the Spanish upper classes in the New World and, as can be inferred, were also very popular status symbols in Spain. They are related the kind of high-platformed shoe referred to as *chopines* in Italian. These were worn by noblewomen (as well as courtesans) and were especially favored in Venetian circles during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. They were tall versions of pattens or *pianelles*. The *pianelle* type shoe appears in Giambattista Basile’s *Il Pentamerone*, namely, in the tale called “The Cat Cinderella” or “La Gatta Cennerentola” (1634-1636). (Dundes, 1982: 11).



“Aschenputtel” which is the Grimms’ version of “Cinderella” published in 1812, they show up as ‘golden slippers.’<sup>31</sup>

In *Cendrillon ou la petite pantoufle de verre*, Perrault’s French literary rendering of the tale dating from 1697 and undoubtedly the most popular and well-known version of the tale today, they morph into ‘glass slippers’ as the plot itself takes on additional new elements and characters, e.g., the fairy godmother. Viewed diachronically, as time passes in some versions the plot is significantly modified. And as it takes on these new elements, the iron boots from before are eventually elevated and turned into ‘glass slippers’.

Also, in several instances, we find a ‘glass stairway’ showing up for no clear reason as an element in the tale (Wheeler, 1943: 223-225). The latter transformation was probably aided the preexisting motif of the ascent to Glass Mountain. In other versions, the theme of ‘glass’ surfaces in different ways, e.g., as ‘stairs’ that are made of glass and break, as ‘a glass hallway’, ‘a wall of glass’, ‘a glass island’, ‘a glass house in the air’, and ‘a glass forest’ (Cox, 1967 [1892]. Perhaps the most frequent references are to some type of glass staircase which implies the need for upward movement. I would note that explicit allusions to Glass Mountain are not found in the tales that feature the young woman as the seeker, that is, in the forerunners of ATU 510A, such as “El Castillo de Oropé,” “El lagarto de siete camisas” and “El Castillo de Irás y no Volverás” as well as in more evolved versions of “Cinderella.” In contrast, references to Glass Mountain feature prominently in the set of tales where the main character is male and seeks to reach the summit and rescue the princess.

We can trace the evolution of this aspect of the tale and see that the element of ‘glass’ gets transferred to the footwear worn by the heroine, a common feature in French language versions of “Cinderella.” This transformation takes place even though the earlier element of recognition brought about by or at least attached to the heroine’s shoes remains a constant. The way the motif of the footwear worn by the heroine gets intertwined with the motif of ‘glass’ is further evidence of the remarkable role of memory in storytelling as well as of how gaps in the collective memory can bring about changes. The process of transformation of ‘iron shoes’ into

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<sup>31</sup> Whereas Perrault invents a fairy godmother who provides Cinderella with her three fancy ballgowns, an ornate carriage, six horses and a coachman, in other versions these transformations are brought about through the intervention of often bizarre inanimate entities. For instance, in *Aschenputtel*, it is a hazel nut bush that magically provides these gifts, equipping the heroine with her sumptuous gowns and dancing shoes, pieces of clothing that are regularly adorned with gold and jewels. In contrast, in “El Castillo de Oropé” the heroine is aided by her amulets: the transformations are facilitated by the magic powers of the nuts gifted to her earlier. Thus, the function of these amulets is to miraculously morph into golden spinning wheels and other fabulous objects just when the heroine needs them. It is unclear whether there is any echo of that shapeshifting process in the hazel nut bush, an entity that plays an analogous function in the brothers Grimm’s *Aschenputtel*. Cf. <http://stenzel.ucdavis.edu/180/anthology/aschenputtel.html>.

‘glass slippers’ can be traced relatively easily when we compare variations of this element in different versions of the same tale. At the same time, we see the persistence of the motif of Glass Mountain even when the adjective ‘glass’ is not explicitly attached to any mountain in the tale itself.

Moreover, shifts in meaning often reflect memory lapses on the part of storytellers in times past and their attempts to make sense of the elements that remained. In short, the development of this motif is an example of the kind of changes that can be wrought in tales from iteration to iteration and especially over many years of exclusively oral transmission. Initially, the oral nature of the tales allowed each group of storytellers to alter the tale by making it best fit the local expectations, the prevailing cultural conceptualizations, as well as the perceived social and psychological needs of the audience. Still most changes were unconscious or at any rate unselfconscious, including changes introduced by these occasional memory lapses and translation snafus.

Additional research into the variants of the Cinderella tales might shed further light on the process by which the earlier storyline was so radically modified. One might speculate that at some point the ‘glass’ of Glass Mountain got misplaced, reinterpreted by the storyteller and assigned to other objects. Eventually it came to be attached to the shoes worn by the heroine. And that in turn might have moved the story into a different setting that was more in accordance with the common class-oriented theme of a poor but beautiful young girl who leaves her life of drudgery behind. Finally, through the magic powers of her benevolent fairy godmother, she is appears transformed into a princess, outfitted with marvelous ball-gowns and glass slippers. And, of course, she ends up marrying the prince. However, the role assigned to her is a totally passive.

Moreover, in keeping with the working hypothesis put forward here, the motif of ‘glass’ or ‘crystal’ along with a storyline portraying someone held captive and remaining asleep because of a powerful potion may well have influenced the structure of a tale like “Snow White” and closely related tales such as the Grimm brothers’ “The Glass Coffin” where there is a gender reversal, the female becomes the passive actor while the Crystal or Glass Mountain, the location where previously the bear husband was held captive, appears to metamorphize into a glass sarcophagus.

Until now the debate over Cinderella’s slippers has focused primarily on whether her ‘glass slippers’ were originally ‘fur boots’ that were misinterpreted, through by a mis-construal of the French word *vair* ‘fur’ and the word *verre* ‘glass’, a debate that folklorists put to rest years ago (Delarue, 1982: 110-111). Nonetheless, when deeper temporal dimensions of the tale are probed a more likely candidate for reinterpreting the footwear of the heroine comes into view: that in earlier stages of the modern tale’s evolution it was the presence of the Glass or Crystal Mountain

that played a key role in upgrading her shoe apparel. Over time, donning ‘iron shoes’ or ‘iron claws’ was no longer appropriate against the feudally coded backdrop of the tale. When compared with the more austere setting of “The Castle of Oropé,” we can see that the backdrop—and interpretative contextual framework—has changed radically: it is now filled with opulent palaces, princes and princesses, images of the rich and famous, fabulous ball-gowns richly bejeweled and adorned with priceless threads of gold and silver, where a pair of glass slippers seems to fit perfectly.

In his famous refutation of the *vair* (‘fur’) to *verre* (‘glass’) theory, Delarue assumes that the ‘glass slipper’ was always a ‘glass slipper’:

The motif of the glass slipper is traditional, and can be found in several foreign tale types for each of which I will cite only one example. In a Scottish version of Cinderella which contains more archaic and more universal traits than Perrault’s version (it is a helpful animal, a little black lamb, and not a fairy, who give the three dresses to the heroine) there are also glass shoes which provide the means of identifying the young girl. In another Scottish tale of the “Peau d’Ane” (Ass-skin [Cat-skin]) type, the young maiden whose father wants to marry her asks him successively for three marvelous dresses, and then for glass shoes, and it is one of the shoes lost which makes it possible for her to be recognized. In an Irish tale of the Psyche type, the heroine, leaving to search for her husband, who is in an inaccessible castle atop a glass mountain, receives from an old man a pair of glass shoes which enable her to climb the slippery slope. (Delarue, 1982: 113)

Indeed, in justifying the presence of a ‘glass’ slipper, Delarue uses this line of argument:

All those who are familiar with *märchen* know that glass, copper, gold, silver, diamonds are the precious materials of which things in the fairytale realm are made, things in our real world are made of ordinary materials. There one finds castles, cities, mountains made of copper, gold, silver, or of glass, forests in which trees have leave of gold, silver, or glass; the tale of the glass (or crystal) mountain is widely distributed in northern and eastern Europe. (Delarue, 1982:113)

Again, here the deeper symbolism of Glass Mountain is not examined or the possibility that Cinderella (ATU 501A) is a more evolved version of a much older tale in which scaling Glass Mountain by the heroine played a major role.

## 8.0 Further Commentary on the Role of Worldview in the Folktales

As a further example of the power that folktales exercised in shaping the worldview of a non-literate population, we can turn to the worldview of Lajos Ámi (1886–1962), an illiterate Hungarian storyteller with a prolific repertoire who was interviewed by Sandor Erdész some sixty years ago. Erdész’s findings were reported in 1961 in a remarkable article called “The World Conception of Lajos Ámi, Storyteller” (Erdész, 1961). In his comments, Lajos Ámi attempts to explain to the interviewer the geography of the world as he sees it, as well as the cosmology he has constructed to make sense of it. In the process of doing so, it becomes clear

that his worldview was shaped by the content of the Hungarian folktales he had in his repertoire and the locations that appeared repeatedly in them.

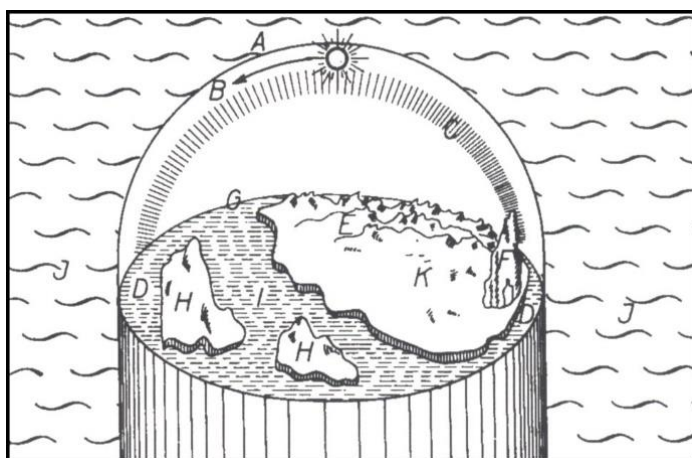
This is not surprising given the circumstances in which he lived and the cultural conceptualizations to which he was exposed. His was an oral culture, relatively untouched by the worldview common to Western thought, the latter being a worldview that derives, primarily, from written sources, the tenets of which have been transmitted across the generations chiefly by literate speakers interacting with other literate speakers, and only later passed down to the rest of the population, including to the non-literate segments of it. And then over many centuries these understandings filtered down, penetrating even zones where orality was still commonplace. Thus, in other locales cultural conceptualizations common to literate Western thought acted to reframe even the thought patterns of unlettered speakers who lived primarily in orality and did not have direct access to these written sources.

In this sense, the worldview of Lajos Ámi is a remarkable example of the way that in times past for those living exclusively in orality, folktales often functioned as essentially the sole authoritative basis of their conceptualization of the world. Consequently, the case of Lajos Ámi, rather than being unique, could be viewed as exemplary of the kind of worldview once accessible to non-literate populations for whom, in the absence of other source material, the stories that passed from one generation to the next acted as kind of encyclopedia, a source of cultural conceptualizations that were validated by their traditional nature.

Consequently, the fact that Lajos Ámi constructed his map of the world and the cosmos based on the information he had gleaned from these tales is quite logical. In short, he attempted to make sense of the motifs, objects and locations that repeatedly showed up in the stories. For instance, what Ámi refers to as the “Hole in the World” appears to correspond to the hole in the earth or deep shaft that is a key feature of the Bear’s Son tale. The influence of the plot of the Bear’s Son is especially noteworthy, e.g., the hero who, lowered on a rope, descend into the hole and rescues the princess or princesses. And, for the Hungarian storyteller, in this world the enemy or enemies are the dragons.

Ámi also speaks of the location known as Glass or Crystal Mountain. In other words, his naïve worldview comes from processing on the information he finds in the tales. From them he creates a map, a geography that fits these elements into an over-arching worldview. In other words, what we see is a historicizing of the events narrated in the tales, rather than placing them on a separate plane of reality. As Erdész states: “L. Ámi, according to his own individual opinion, believes the reality of his tales” (Erdesz, 1961: 336).

**Figure 8.** The Middle World after L. Ámi. A: the firmament; B: the orbit of the Sun; C: the thick layer of air; D: the place where the Sun sets; E: the Ice Mountains; F: the Glass Mountains; G: the edge of the world; H: the continents; I: the sea; J: the sea within the universe; K: the Hole in the World.



There was no difference between reality and Ámi's "mythical impression of the world concept in his stories, for both ideas are nourished by the realm of Hungarian folk-belief" (Erdesz, 1961: 327). According to Ámi:

"The 'Hole in the World' is somewhere in Russia, but nobody knows its exact location any more. In the hole there is a ladder just as in the smokestacks of factories. It happened that the dragons kidnapped the king's daughter. 'When the dragons were taking the king's daughter under the Earth, they had the ladder kicked off by the magic steed so that the girl couldn't be followed.' But the knight still rescued the princess. 'There wasn't any ladder in the whole world, but they made a device out of a barrel which they lowered on a rope.' (Erdesz, 1961: 333).

The conception of the world described by L. Ámi makes it apparent that he didn't get this world concept ready-made, that is, already explicitly constructed for him by others. Instead, we find, as Erdész points out:

Based on his own observation combined with tales and other traditional elements, he formed a system out of it himself. Since he was forced to work in his early childhood instead of study, he didn't learn how to read and write. Unavoidable illiteracy excluded him from possibilities of a higher scholastic training. Therefore, he could gain his knowledge only from oral tradition. L. Ámi referred to two sources of knowledge when he was speaking about his religious imagination. His notions, 'I know it from stories' and 'As I heard it' show that his world of imagination was formed partly by his own tales and partly by the traditions preserved by the community. The community cut off from books also interprets the phenomena of the world by interpolating supernatural power and fictional elements. (Erdész, 1961: 335-336)

Naturally, in the case of Lajos Ámi there is no indication whatsoever that he was familiar with the archaic belief in the ursine genealogy of humans. However, it would not be difficult to imagine the way that the two sets of tales, discussed in this essay, were contextualized

earlier, one charting the birth and adventures of Bear's Son and yet another telling of the journey undertaken by a bear-human's wife to Glass Mountain.

## 9.0 Evidence for the Fusion of Elements from Two Sets of Tales

What I suspect is that these two sets of traditional tales<sup>32</sup> were once more closely linked and perhaps even told one after another. Moreover, the fact that both tales were part of the repertoire of storytellers in times past could help explain how later on elements from the two sets of tales got mixed up together. The result of this fusion is a hybrid type of tale in which there is a gender reversal: it is the hero who seeks his lost wife. However, here I will argue that the masculine identity of the protagonist comes from the fact that a set of variants developed in which the hero ended up conflated with the Bear's Son.

To test the validity of this theory three exemplary stories will be analyzed, "The Iron Shoes," "Los llanos de Quiquiriquí" and finally "The Maiden on Crystal Mountain. It will be argued that all three of them fall into this hybrid class. Our first example is a remarkable tale called "The Iron Shoes" found in the collection of stories called *The Turnip Princess and Other New Discovered Fairy Tales*" (von Schönwerth, 2015: 9-11), translated from the original German by Maria Tatar. That story is a curious amalgam of elements from versions of the Bear's Son tale, specifically the scene in the German story where the Bear's Son equivalent is beaten and pursued by his attackers for reasons not explained. In the German tale, the protagonist named Hans<sup>33</sup> discovers the identity of the luminous woman that he has encountered: "It turned out that she was a princess who had fallen under a spell, and the curse was now broken" (von Schönwerth, 2015: 10). However, exactly what causes the curse to be broken is not explained. As a reward, she gives her hand to him in marriage. He is now dressed up in magnificent clothes and given as many servants as he wanted, as well as untold wealth.

He decides to visit his father but before he leaves, the princess gives him a ring in case anything goes wrong: "All he has to do is turn it, and she would be there to help him" (von Schönwerth, 2015: 10). The ring in question could be a kind of memory trace, a remnant from earlier recitations of the Bear's Son tale. I refer specifically to the talismans that the Spirit Helper Animals give the Bear's Son, telling him that all he has to do to get their help is touch the respective talisman and call out the name of the animal, an act that allows the Bear's Son to

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<sup>32</sup> For a breakdown of the tale types making up the two sets of tales, cf. Appendix 1.

<sup>33</sup> While Hans is a name regularly found in German folktales, we might keep in mind that it is also utilized as the name of Hans Bär, the Bear's Son, as well as in German versions of (ATU 650A) "Strong John", i.e., "Der Starke Hans." Whether this coincidence is significant is another question.

shapeshift into the requisite Helper Animal. At the same time such talismans are commonplace elements in folktales.

As the story called “The Iron Shoes” continues, additional scenes come into view that appear to be a garbled version of those found in the classic versions of Cinderella (ATU 501A) but fused with a storyline that coincides with that of “The Castle of Oropé.” The difference is that we now have a male protagonist whose wife goes missing for reasons not explained. The earlier motivation has dropped out of the story: there is no mention of the act of burning the character’s fur coat. In other words, the tale, leaving aside the gender inversion, blends elements that are older with elements that are newer in a way that exemplifies Frog’s discussion of how ethnocultural substrata function with some elements being more resistant to change than others, some elements older than others.

In “The Iron Shoes” after the protagonist receives the magic ring, the scene shifts to a ball that is arranged by the king. And there is a confusing explanation of why Hans is not allowed to dance with anyone: it is “because of his good looks.” Upset by the knights who are making fun of him—they were jealous of how handsome he is—he turns the ring and suddenly a stylish carriage rolls up and his wife appears, “more beautiful than anyone else there.” This episode appears to be a gender inverted version of a scene from the tale of Cinderella (ATU 501A), for example, as told by Perrault and Disney. As I have alleged, ATU 501A itself appears to be a more modern version of the adventures of the Bear’s Wife (ATU 425).

The morning after the feast, his beautiful wife abandons him—with no reason given—and he is left alone: “His old clothes were laid out on the bed and on the floor was a pair of iron shoes. A note was attached, and it read: “I’m punishing you by leaving. Don’t try to find me. You will never discover where I am, even if you wear out these iron shoes.” Here the storyline changes the role played by the iron shoes for in “The Castile of Oropé” where it is only after her iron shoes are worn out that the heroine will find her husband.

In “The Iron Shoes” the hero’s travels lead him to a mountain, although it has no name. The interlude that follows concerning three men fighting over three precious objects may or may not be vague narrative traces of the magic acorns and their transformative qualities. Then the wind shows up and takes the hero to the town where the princess—that is, his wife—is planning to get married to another man. Hans intercedes so that the ceremony cannot be completed. The story ends with these words: “He showed her the iron shoes and how worn down they were from his search. She was overjoyed to see her husband again. The two of them made up, and then they had a real wedding” (von Schönwerth, 2015: 11). Once again, in the concluding scene the iron shoes are the focus of attention and a key to bringing the couple together. Even though elements

associated with the classic versions of “Cinderella” are present, e.g., the stylish carriage, in this case the footwear continues to be portrayed as these bizarre iron shoes. Another archaic element lies in the fact that his travels lead him to a mountain, although in this instance without it being called Glass or Crystal Mountain.

In reference to the storyline in which this gender reversal appears to take place, Tatar (von Schönwerth, 2015: 218) compares the narrative first to ATU 425 and then states: “Less well known is ‘The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife’ (ATU 400), in which a boy leaves home, liberates a bewitched princess, loses her by boasting about her beauty, and sets out in search of his wife, enduring a series of tests to win her back.” As can be appreciated, the traditional classification system of tale types does not lend itself to an exploration of the diachronic axis of the tales. Their structure is not static. And hence their functioning as ‘dynamic mental models’ is highlighted by the fact that any given tale can be viewed as momentary synchronic totality into which the preceding substrata of earlier periods have been assimilated and filtered (giving rise to continuities and discontinuities) (cf. Frog, 2011: 24-25). In contrast to this dynamic model that recognizes the diachronic axis of the tales, the traditional classification system is an approach that tends to assign motif-complexes to specific tale types. In doing so, even when it is admitted that a given tale type may have motifs borrowed from another tale type, this approach ends up creating the impression of separate non-communicating entities.

The strong possibility exists that early versions of the two sets of tales got combined. On the one hand, we have tales that are classified as ATU 301, that is, “The Bear’s Son Tale.” And on the other hand, we have the set of tales classified as “The Search for the Lost Husband” (ATU 425). That tale type includes well known stories such as “Beauty and the Beast” and “East of the Sun and West of the Moon.” These have been subcategorized as ATU 425A while the tale called “El Castillo de Oropé” belongs to this latter subgrouping.

In contrast, in the tale type ATU 530 it is a man who seeks to free a woman who is located or trapped atop Glass Mountain. One interpretation of the tales has been that a gender reversal took place. However, rather than a simple gender inversion having produced the narratives that have been categorized as Male Cinderella tales, something more complicated appears to have been going on in the retelling of the plot. Indeed, it appears that elements from the plots of the several tale types got mixed up together, as has been suggested for “The Iron Shoes.”

With respect to this possibility we can turn to another tale called “Los llanos de Quiquiriquí,” collected by Wheeler in Jalisco, Mexico (Wheeler, 1943: 280-282). In that tale, the protagonist is male and what happens is reminiscent of certain aspects of the Male Cinderella



tales, classified as ATU 530.<sup>34</sup> However, in the case of the tale recorded by Wheeler, there is no doubt that the plot contains elements from two tale types (ATU 301 and ATU 425A), and to such an extent that there is no question that at some point in the past elements from the plot of both tales got jumbled together.

Briefly restated, the plot is as follows. A father dies and leaves a magic tablecloth, a chair and pair of boots to his three sons. The youngest son tricks his brothers and steals the inheritance, taking possession of all three magic objects. He is aided by the wind, the rain, the sun and finally a gale force wind. It is the *ventarrón* (the gale force wind) who flies him to his desired destination but upon doing so, drops him in a deep well, i.e., a hole in the ground. This is the underground location where three princesses are being held captive by a bandit. With the help of a fairy who gives him a machete, a dagger and a rope, he overcomes the guardian serpent with two hundred heads and the bandit. Naturally, in the process he manages to rescue the three princesses. He then returns to his three brothers their share of the inheritance and marries the youngest princess.

When we compare the plot elements, features central to ATU 301 show up, e.g., the hole in the ground, the three princesses trapped in the Underworld, the rope, and the serpent who must be defeated. But the storyline also introduces a magic tablecloth, recalling the magic talismans of the heroine of ATU 425A, a pair of boots, although this time the marvelous footwear helps the hero to run faster. Then there is the sequence of seeking aid concerning how to reach the desired destination, an interlude that recalls the sequence found in versions of ATU 425A which regularly includes stop-offs at the house of the sun, the moon and finally the wind. In this case, however, the sequence is somewhat out of order and unusual. First, aid is sought from the wind, next the rain, followed by the sun, none of whom can help the hero. The moon doesn't show up at all. Finally, it is the gale force wind that flies the hero to the right location, at which point the hole in the earth from ATU 301 suddenly comes into view.

There is another tale that provides further evidence of how features from ATU 301 and ATU 425A got melded together to form a single tale in which the protagonist comes across as a masculine version of Cinderella, i.e., the tale type referred ATU 530. The folktale is called "The Maiden on the Crystal Mountain" and was collected in Lower Austria (Vernaleken, 1889: 274-279). It appears in the collection of folktales by the Austrian philologist and folklorist Theodor Vernaleken. The volume is entitled *In the Land of Marvels. Folk-tales from Austria and Bohemia* (Vernaleken, 1889). That features from both ATU 301 and ATU 425A end up in the same tale

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<sup>34</sup> It is still unclear exactly how many versions of these Male Cinderella tales exist. Hartland comments that in the typology laid out by Cox, there are "twenty-three hero-tales, that is, tales wherein the hero is a masculine Cinderella" (Hartland, 1982 [1898]: 60).

indicates that both tales were part of the repertoire shared by previous storytellers and that rather than remaining separate, the male protagonist of ATU 301 as well as plot features from that tale type were superimposed on ATU 425A. The result was a gender reversal in that the female protagonist seeking her lost husband is replaced by a male protagonist searching for his wife or lover.

As we will see, the way that elements from the two tales get stitched together is quite remarkable. However, to appreciate how these features became melded together requires more detailed knowledge of the plot of the tale in which the hero is the Bear's Son and the way that the action in that tale has been classified. Consequently, before we examine "The Maiden of the Crystal Mountain" we need to keep in mind the way these tales have been treated and the problems that have resulted because of the approach used in folkloristics, namely, the use of tale types to categorize the tales. As will become evident, that approach freezes the tale type, leaving little room for exploring the diachronic axis of the tale itself, the way that it was modified over time and how features from different tale types end up blended together. The possibility of charting the processes that led to this mingling of features is obviated when the tales themselves are separated and rigidly compartmentalized because, in theory, they must be assigned to one tale type or another.

Consequently, before examining the plot of "The Maiden of the Crystal Mountain" we need to delve more deeply into the plot elements found in variants of the Bear's Son tales. Being familiar with the less evolved versions of this tale type, i.e., those in which the hero's helpers are animals with special powers, not giant anthropomorphic figures endowed with extraordinary strength, will allow us to see how these blends came about. As a result, we will be able to appreciate how certain elements associated with the adventures of the Bear's Son were interwoven into the plot of "The Maiden of the Crystal Mountain."

At this juncture, a few words are in order about the methodology used in the analysis of the variants of the Bear's Son tale. If a researcher has several versions of a manuscript—in this case many versions of a folktale—and it is one with no known original, then established methods of textual criticism can be used to reconstruct what appears to be the earliest version of the text. One of these methods is called stemmatics. I have applied an updated version of this method as described by Frog (2013). The approach involves comparing extant versions of a text to identify the commonalities, additions and modifications that show up. As part of that task, one is concerned with the cultural conceptualizations that surface in the variants. These can suggest why certain structural elements were retained, developed, or lost over time. And these structural components of the plot are linked to the strength of the conceptual frames that were operating in the background, shaping the production and modification of the plot and the nature of the

characters. In this instance special attention has been placed on identifying clues in the texts for the belief that humans descended from bears and for the animist relational ontology which supported that belief.

In my own investigation of this topic, I began by spending several decades comparing and contrasting European as well as North American examples of the Bear's Son tales while paying special attention to the versions collected in and around the Basque-speaking region. In the process, gradually the contours of the earlier storyline came into clearer focus. I realized that some versions were much more archaic than others in terms of the implied worldview, completeness of the storyline and the logic embedded in the sequence of episodes making up the plot. This has been the case of the folktales collected in the Pyrenean region. In the plot summary that follows, the protagonist is referred to as Little Bear, given that in Basque the hero is called *Hartzkume* (from *hartz* 'bear' and *-kume* 'infant, child') as well as *Harzko* (*hartz* 'bear' plus the diminutive affix *-ko*).

The tale begins with a description of a young woman who goes out walking in the woods, when suddenly she meets a bear. In some versions it is a very handsome bear, and she goes off with him to his cave. In others the bear, being more brutish, grabs her and carries her off against her will. Sometime later, a child is born, half-bear, half-human. Years pass and one day Little Bear decides he wants to go out and see the world. He manages to remove the rock that his father places each day at the mouth of the cave when he goes out hunting. Little Bear and his mother escape and at this point the adventures of Little Bear commence.

Early on, he has an encounter which allows him to acquire his Spirit Animal Helpers. Walking along a path in the woods, he spies four animals ahead of him standing next to a dead animal. They are a lion, a hunting dog, an eagle, and an ant.<sup>35</sup> Lion calls out to him: "We're hungry and have been arguing about how to divide up the meat. Can you help us?" Little Bear responds saying that he will try. "Lion, I'll give you the haunch which is what you like best." And to Dog, he gives the ribs. Addressing Eagle, he says: "To you I'll give the innards and intestines because you don't have any teeth, and this is what you like best." Finally, to the tiny Ant, Little Bear says, "To you I'll give the skin and bones and when you've eaten the marrow from the bones you can use them for your house when it rains." With that, Lion responds:

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<sup>35</sup> Although the lion shows up regularly, it could be that earlier this animal was some type of European wild cat, e.g., a lynx. On the other hand, contrary to popular opinion, lions were found in southeast Europe in pre-Christian times and even into the Common Era. They survived in Bulgaria until the 4th or 3rd century CE. Further to the east in the Transcaucasian region lions continued to be found until the 10th century. The animal's historic range covered all the plains and foothills of eastern Transcaucasia, westward almost to Tbilisi in modern Georgia. Cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_lions\\_in\\_Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_lions_in_Europe). Then in the case of the hunting dog, earlier that slot might have been filled by a fox.

“You’ve done so well with the division that we want to reward you.” And each of them gives Little Bear a talisman, telling him that when he needs their help all he has to do is touch it and call out their name. That way he will gain the animal’s innate abilities and be able to take on the shape of the animal in question. Lion gives him a tuft of fur, Dog another tuft; the Eagle a feather, and little Ant a leg because she has several.

Time passes, and Little Bear finds himself at a farmstead where he meets the young woman who lives there with her old father. Naturally, since all good stories need a romantic twist, Little Bear falls in love and wants to run off with the young woman. But she explains that she cannot leave because she must care for her old father who happens to be immortal. Little Bear insists that there must be a way to get the old man to die. At this point the first instance of shapeshifting takes place. The young woman tells Little Bear to come back the next day to the garden where she will be combing the old man’s hair and removing his lice. Little Bear is to climb up into the tree located next to them and hide in its branches while she asks the old fellow what will make him die.

So Little Bear shows up, shapeshifted into an ant, and climbs silently up into the tree from where he overhears the old man’s response: “For me to die, the challenger will have to do battle with my brother who is a shapeshifter, too. He will appear as a porcupine and the challenger must show up as a lion and engage in battle with him. If he triumphs, a hare will appear, and the challenger must turn into a dog and catch it.” The old man continues explaining: “Once the hare is caught, a pigeon will fly up and my opponent must turn into an eagle, snatch the pigeon, open it, and remove the egg inside, take the egg and break it on the forehead of my brother who by then will appear as a snake. When that happens the egg inside my head will break and I will become mortal and die.”

Naturally, Little Bear is pre-equipped to follow these instructions successfully, shapeshifting into one animal after another, while his opponent does the same. In the end the shapeshifted snake (or dragon) is defeated, and Little Bear’s opponent is no longer immortal. From one point of view, the identity of the antagonist is not entirely clear: he either is the father of the young woman or her master. However, other versions of the Basque tale point directly to his identification with the Herensuge, the serpent or dragon who is killed by a blow to his forehead with the magical egg (Satrústegui, 1975: 18-21).

Before leaving the topic of the Spirit Animal Helpers, a few final comments are in order which will help to flesh out the older animist relational ontology embedded in the tale. A closer analysis of the plot reveals other cultural conceptualizations that informed the interpretive framework for the tale, that is, an animistic ontology typical of hunter-gatherers who lived (or

live) in close contact with bears and other wild animals, along with the associated belief in shapeshifting that is embedded in the narrative (Brightman, 2002; Hallowell, 1926). On this view, the backdrop of the story becomes Nature itself, upon which the actions are projected. A child, seeing an eagle swooping down to catch its prey, could have interpreted the scene, symbolically, as an exteriorization of a familiar episode from the traditional narrative.

When interpreted on this deeper level, what we find in the tale is a series of purely ritual battles between two shapeshifters, one who is already half-bear, and his older adversary. From this perspective, the role of the four Spirit Animal Helpers is of fundamental importance to the hero, beginning with the smallest one, Ant. Moreover, there is a pattern to the ritual confrontations: they are encounters between a predator and its prey.

Table 1. The Predator-Prey pattern in the “Bear’s Son Tale”

Predator	Prey
Lion	Porcupine
Hunting Dog	Hare
Eagle	Pigeon
[Pigeon Egg]	Snake

In the end, it is a magic egg that makes the old man become mortal like the rest of Nature, subject to life and death, rather than standing apart as a transcendent immortal being. The act of breaking the pigeon’s egg on the forehead of the Herensuge has an ethnographic counterpart worth mentioning, namely, a remarkable custom that I was told about back in the 1980s. It survived in the Basque Country into the 1930s and 1940s and was performed by the godmother of a young child when the latter was just beginning to babble but had not yet started to speak. A pigeon egg, referred to as an “Herensuge egg,” was broken on the child’s forehead. This was thought to make the child “break out speaking” (Azkue, 1989 [1935-1947]: 101). Over time, that ritual evolved into an enduring tradition where the child was presented with a pastry by the godparent. The pastry in question, referred to as a *mona* in Spanish, has an unpeeled hard-boiled egg sitting on top, while the custom of breaking an egg on the forehead of another person to bring about good luck, continues to be practiced on Easter Sunday in various parts of Spain and a hundred years ago it was still found in parts of Europe, such as Bavaria.

Implicit in the tale is a different view of Nature. It is one that contrasts starkly with notion the so-called Law of the Jungle. The latter is the social Darwinian conceptualization of the natural world that dominated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was linked to the notion of the “survival of the fittest,” the fittest being interpreted in that model as the most powerful and hence the strongest. In contradistinction, the equitable division of the dead beast

featured in the tale can be read as a parable of sharing and reciprocity in which Little Bear restores the natural order of things. It speaks of the harmony and balance of Nature and the interlocking networks of dependencies that act to maintain that balance. Large carnivores bring down the prey. Smaller carnivores then approach to eat the scraps. Next in line come the scavenger birds, eagles, and vultures. And, finally, the insects arrive to pick clean the skin and bones. Viewed from the perspective of modern conservation biology, the food web described implicitly in the narrative suggests an understanding of the dynamics of “trophic cascades” and the concept of “keystone species,” e.g., where the actions of large carnivores impact the complex food-web dynamics in positive ways. At the same time, it speaks of the eternal cycle of life and death.

In summary, the ursine genealogy of the main character appears to be grounded in the archaic belief that humans descend from bears. The plot unfolds on a landscape infused by trophic relations, a metaphysics characterized by an awareness of the intricate reciprocal relations inherent in Nature. The complex food-chain network of predator-prey interactions is emphasized, rather than the triumph of “man over beast.” Animals are collaborators and function as active participants. Overall, the plot is framed by elements typical of an animist worldview, including extensive examples of shapeshifting. The storyline revolves around ritual combats between two shapeshifters, each aided by their respective Spirit Animal Helpers.

As we have noted, over the past century, in folkloristics one of the primary concerns of researchers has been the creation of *tale types* that permit the classification of the stories and, in theory, allow for cross-cultural comparisons. For instance, in tales categorized as “The Bear’s Son,” also known as “John the Bear,” the hero is often portrayed as entering a deep hole in the ground, i.e., descending to the underworld to rescue up to three captive princesses. This is a plot line that has elicited many different scholarly labels (Cosquin 1887, Vol. 1: 1-27). The most well-known is that of Aarne-Thompson (Aarne & Thompson, 1961: 90-93), who refers to the story as “The Three Stolen Princesses” (ATU 301)<sup>36</sup> with the following variants: “Quest for a Vanished Princess” (ATU 301A); “The Strong Man and His Companions Journey to the Land of Gold” (ATU 301B); “The Magic Objects” (ATU 301C) and “The Dragons Ravish Princesses” (ATU 301D).<sup>37</sup> Hansen (1957: 24-25, 75-77) classified the tale similarly, with some

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<sup>36</sup> In 2004 an updated version of the Aarne-Thompson (1961) tale type index was published by Uther (2004). Although in the present chapter, tale types are referenced as ATU (Aarne-Thompson-Uther), I would note that use of tale type indexes and the most recent iteration of them have been called into question (Dundes, 1997; Jason, 2006). Vaz da Silva (2000: 187-189) also offers a well-argued critique of the tale type and motif index approach, pointing out its many weaknesses, especially when one attempts to do comparative studies.

<sup>37</sup> A remarkably in-depth discussion of the tale and its diffusion is found in the Wikipedia entry for “Jean de l’Ours”: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean\\_de\\_l'Ours](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_de_l'Ours) (accessed 28 Nov. 2021).

modifications. But he also saw that ATU 301 combined quite often with “Strong John” (ATU 650A) (“Der Starke Hans”), a version of which appears in Grimm.<sup>38</sup>

We need to remember that the label “The Bear’s Son” is a broad one for it encompasses ATU 301 and all its variants and, as has been mentioned, this tale type has been linked to ATU 650A “Strong John.” A key element in the plotline of ATU 301 is the fact that the protagonist acquires two or more unusually strong and fully anthropomorphic companions. When the plotline is compared with the previous description of the tale with the four animal helpers, that is, when it is viewed diachronically, we can see that over time these fully anthropomorphic helpers replaced the four Spirit Animal Helpers found in older variants. This realignment, however, did not eliminate the earlier version itself. Instead, the version that kept the animal helpers ended up relegated by folklorists to a totally separate and supposedly unrelated tale type, ATU 554 called “The Grateful Animals.” And, to complicate matters even more, garbled up versions of the episode of the four spirit animal helpers resurfaced in many languages in a tale type referred to as “The Ogre’s (Devil’s) Heart in the Egg” (ATU 302). A myriad of variants of ATU 302 have been documented in depth by Frazer (1913: 95-141) and these come from all across Europe.

Little attention has been paid to this latter tale type or the fact that the episodes making up the storyline of ATU 554 and ATU 302 overlap in remarkable ways. One of the few studies addressing this topic is that of Vinson who in his collection of Basque folktales talks about a tale called “Les Dons des Trois Animaux” (“The Gifts of the Three Animals”) (Vinson, 1883, I, 166-177, II, 129-131). There are several examples of Spanish language tales where there is a melding of motifs from ATU 301, ATU 302, ATU 650A and ATU 554. For example, there are two versions of a story called “La princesa encantada” (“The Enchanted Princess”) (A. M. Espinosa 1946-1947: 294-299), another called “La serpiente de siete cabezas” (“The Seven-Headed Serpent”) and two versions of “El cuerpo sin alma” (“The Body without a Soul”) collected by Wheeler (1943: 317-339).

To summarize, over time the plot of the tale broke into pieces and the resulting pieces realigned themselves in different ways to reflect the changing cultural conceptualizations of the times. Hence, we find that narratives associated with the expression “The Bear’s Son” include ATU 301, plus ATU 301A, ATU 301B, ATU 301C, and ATU 301D. The latter tale type consists of variants referred to globally by folklorists as “The Three Princesses,” a reference to the three princesses that are rescued by the hero. At the same time there are other tale types that form part of the same narrative tradition, the same phylogenetic narrative lineage: ATU 650A “Strong

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<sup>38</sup> Again the reader is encouraged to consult Appendix 1 where the connections and overlaps between the different tale types are summarized.

John,” ATU 554 “The Grateful Animals, and ATU 302, now shortened to “Soul in an Egg.” In sum, over time the storyline and episodes associated with earlier versions of the tale became fragmented and, as a result, were classified as different tale types (ATU 650A, ATU 554, ATU 302, and ATU 301, plus at least four subtypes of ATU 301).

With this background information in mind, we can turn to our final example of a Male Cinderella, that of “The Maiden on the Crystal Mountain.” This tale, too, features a male protagonist but it is perhaps the tale that shows the clearest signs of being a fusion of elements drawn from two different sources. Given the exemplary significance of the tale, I am reproducing most of it verbatim, just as it appears in the collection of folktales by Vernaleken:

Once there was a poor woman who had a son named Hans. One day he went into the forest, and after a while came to a pond. As he approached the edge three beautiful women sprang out of the water, threw aside their garments, changed into ducks, and flew away. The middle one of the three especially pleased Hans, who went home and told his mother what he had seen. She said, ‘Go into the forest again, and build thee a hut near the pool.’ This was done. At the time of the new moon he diligently searched morning and evening the banks of the pool.

One evening as he was thus searching, he saw three garments lying on the bank. Quickly he took the middle one, ran with it into his hut, and put it in a chest. No sooner had he done this than there was a knock at the door. A voice cried, ‘I pray you let me in; I have lost my garment.’ Hans sprang up quickly, opened the door and got behind it. The maiden came in, and swiftly threw around her Hans’s cloak, which he had left on the bed then she begged Hans to give her her shift. This he would not do, but went to fetch his mother. He had not gone halfway before it occurred to him that he had not locked the chest where the shift lay. Quickly he returned, but on getting to the hut, both door and chest were open, and the maiden was gone. On the table lay a billet inscribed with the following in golden letters: ‘My home is on the Crystal Mountain.’ Immediately Hans set out to seek the Crystal Mountain. If he came into a town he cried aloud, ‘Know ye not where is the Crystal Mountain? But no one could inform him. One day he came to a great house, and from a gable window a gentleman was looking down. Said Hans, ‘Know ye not where is the Crystal Mountain?’ ‘I know not, but perhaps one of my servants knows’, answered the gentleman. Then he drew out a silver pipe, and gave a loud whistle. Then came bears, wolves, and all kinds of beasts, and last of all limped an old hare on three feet. ‘Know’st thou where is the Crystal Mountain? asked his lord. ‘Of course I know it,’ said the hare. They came into a great forest, and the hare said, ‘Go straight on, and thou wilt find the mountain.’ At these words he sprang up and vanished.

Hans had now to wander alone. After some time he saw a dead horse lying on the road. By the horse was a bear, a wolf, a raven, and an ant. These animals were striving for the corpse. As Hans came nearer, the raven said, ‘Dear Hans, divide the horse among us.’ Hans immediately set to work. First he cut off the horse’s head, and cast it before the ant, saying, ‘Thou likes to creep about in hollows, take the head. Thereupon he opened the corpse, and gave the entrails to the raven, the bones to the wolf, and the flesh to the bear. The animals were contented with the division. Then the bear and the wolf each gave to Hans a hair, the ant a foot, and the raven a feather. The animals said, ‘If thou art in need, lay the gift upon thy tongue, and thou mayest then be changed into the animal from which the gift proceeds.’ They then departed. But Hans went forward on the road. Having advanced some distance, he noticed afar off a flashing and sparkling. It was the Crystal Mountain. Merrily Hans went to the foot of the mountain. On its summit stood a fine castle. Hans tried to ascent the mountain, but it was in vain; he kept gliding backwards, for the mountain was as



smooth as a mirror. He now changed himself into a bear, and dug with his paws steps in the mountain. But the sharp splinters of glass wounded him, and soon he could no longer continue the work. Then Hans changed himself into a wolf, that he might hold fast with his teeth. But neither did this succeed. So he changed himself into a raven, and flew up the mountain. When he was at the top he saw the maiden he knew standing by an open window. (Vernaleken, 1889: 274-279).

At this juncture in the plot, Hans changes himself into an ant, using the talisman given to him by that animal, and creeps under the bed where the witch is sleeping who holds the maiden captive. But she spies him and says: 'I know thou art no ordinary ant,' and she changes him into a man. She then puts him through a series of tests, one of which involves sucking the contents out of an egg. That trial is followed by others in which he also succeeds. And in the end he is reunited with the maiden, marries her and becomes lord of the castle and king of the city.

To recap, so far, we have examined evidence from three Male Cinderella tales. However, there are many additional examples of these blended tales that could be documented but which for the sake of economy have not been analyzed here.<sup>39</sup> While we cannot determine when these fusions occurred or exactly why they took place, the fact that they did take place is unquestionable. From the examples, there is no question that versions of ATU 301 and ATU 425A interacted in some fashion resulting in blended narratives. As we have demonstrated, in variants of ATU 301, the main character appears as a man, often portrayed as half-human and half-bear whereas in variants of ATU 425A the active protagonist is a young woman who, although represented as human at least initially, is married to what can also be interpreted as a half-human, half-bear being. But the woman rejects his beariness.

Assuming an animist relational ontology framed the earliest versions of the tale, her rejection of the bear-like nature of her lover could be interpreted as causing her punishment

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<sup>39</sup> For instance, there are the tales in which "El Castillo de Irás y no Volverás" plays a role and the four Spirit Helper Animals are discussed extensively as the protagonist goes in search of his beloved. Espinosa refers to these tales as examples of "La princesa encantada." The tale with the most remarkable blending of elements is No. 142 (A. M. Espinosa, 1946-1947, II, 295-300) in which the Spirit Helper Animals appear and play a major role. There is no mention of the anthropomorphically conceived companions or brothers of the hero. In this instance, the princess is being held captive in a castle, although the name of the castle is not mentioned. Lest one think that these blended tales are only found in the Iberian Peninsula, we have an Irish version in which a dragon is slain and the recognition of the identity of the hero is brought about by "a blue glass boot." Called "The Thirteenth Son of the King of Erin," story presents a prince driven from home who ends up working as a lowly cowherd. On three occasions he secretly sheds his rags and, dressed in glorious apparel, fights a dragon, and finally slays him. He then reverts to his humble position. Eventually, the rescued princess gets hold of one of his blue glass boots and a proclamation is issued, stating that whoever this boot fits is to have the princess in marriage. One after another, all the bridegrooms-to-be try on the boot, but to no avail, until only the cowherd is left. And, of course, the boot fits him and the marriage is celebrated (Curtin, 1890: 99-112). However, in the Irish tale there is no mention of the Spirit Helper Animals who continued to play a central role in the two tales just mentioned collected by A. M. Espinosa, one in Valladolid and another in Seville. With respect to the tale from Valladolid, I would emphasize the striking similarities between it and the Basque language tale in Arratibel (1980: 65-74). But the latter tale features the Spirit Animal Helpers without any mention of glass slippers or iron boots. In short, it is not an example of the blended variant.

and/or repentance, depending on one's point of view. In the end she successfully scales Glass Mountain with the aid of her magic boots or claws, a possible allusion to her transformation into a bear or at least the recognition of her innate bearhood, and more broadly, the ursine ancestry of human beings. Given the other connotations of the ascent to Glass Mountain, that is, as the analogous to the journey taken by the soul upon death to gain access to the world hereafter, in times past the successful completion of heroine's journey could have been understood to have more profound and transcendental implications. The Male Cinderella tales discussed here are a curious blend of plot elements taken from ATU 301 and ATU 425 and in which the four Spirit Helper Animals from ATU 554 also show up.

## 10.0 Before Cinderella...

As Dundes stated in 1982 in his book *Cinderella: A Casebook*, the tale of Cinderella is one of the best-known stories in the Western world and its popularity has continued unabated until the present time. Plus, it has always had a special appeal for women. Indeed, two of the major comparative studies of Cinderella were both put together by women. The first was the amazing research effort of Marian Roalfe Cox (1967 [1892]), entitled *Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-five Variants of Cinderella, Catskin, and Cap O' Rushes* which contained abstracts from 345 variants. Published in 1892, the work was even more remarkable because of the limited resources available to investigators at that time. For instance, speaking of Roalfe's impressive 535-page compendium of versions of the tale, Dundes points out that "it was no small task to locate so many texts of Cinderella in the days before the creation of such modern folkloristic aids as tale type indices and motif-indices, which facilitate the finding of hundreds of versions found in print and in folklore archives throughout the Western world in a matter of moments" (Dundes, 1982: vii).

Implicit in Dundes' words is the assumption that such tale type and motif indices shed clear light on the tales and the relationships that the variants have to each other. And there is a further supposition that classifying folktales by separating them into tale types and by motifs is the best approach to gaining access to the meanings implicit in the tales themselves and the cultural conceptualizations that were embedded in them. In the current investigation, both these assumptions have been challenged. More specifically, although there is no doubt that categorizing folktales by tale type indices has aided the collection and comparative study of variants of each tale type, the question of the way that elements from one tale type bleed over and show up in a totally separate tale type has not been part of the purview of investigators concerned with the so-called Cinderella cycle. Rather, as has been demonstrated, ATU 510A, the tale type classification assigned to "Cinderella", contains elements that are found in folktales

belonging to different tale types. And in the case of the so-called “Male Cinderella” tales the profusion of elements drawn from other tale types becomes even more striking.

More than a half century would pass from the time that Cox published her work until the Swedish folklorist Anna Birgitta Rooth would complete her doctoral dissertation on the same tale under the direction of Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, one of the founders of folkloristics. Rooth’s work, called *Cinderella Cycle* and published in 1951, brought together some seven hundred versions of the tale, twice the number assembled by her predecessor. Only four years after the publication of Rooth’s monumental work, Swahn came out with his book *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, a 493-page exhaustive analysis of more than 1100 examples of the tale type ATU 425 and the motifs that make it up (1955). The search for variants of this tale type has continued and by 2004, according to Karen Bamford, more than 1,500 variants of the tale had been recorded from Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. However, until now the connections between the plot of “Cinderella” (ATU 510A) and that of “Cupid and Psyche” (ATU 425) and its earlier renditions, i.e., variants belonging to the tale type classified as “The Search for the Lost Husband,” have not attracted the attention of folklorists.

As Dundes and others have observed, the tale of Cinderella has had a special appeal to women. However, beginning in the 1970s its role in the identity formation in young women started to be subjected to increased critical scrutiny from a myriad of feminist researchers (Bonner, 2020; Heiniger, 2020; Lieberman, 1986b; Toomeos-Orglaan, 2013; Yolen, 1982). In these works, ethical and moral aspects of the tales and their psychological effect on women and children have been a central focus. In other words, today it is no longer possible to ignore the role they have played for centuries as part of the socialization process of generations of young women. By means of these tales, children were conditioned to assume and accept certain identities and socially conditioned roles that prepared women to become passive, self-denying, obedient and sacrificial. They are portrayed as dependent on external forces, rather than on their own initiative. And the tale of Cinderella, particularly Perrault’s and subsequently Disney’s rendition of the story, have played a stellar role. As Lieberman (1986a; 1986b) and others have argued, traditional fairy tales inculcated false images concerning the role of the two sexes. Indeed, “most of the heroines were passive, helpless and submissive, and in the course of each narrative they functioned largely as a prize for the daring prince” (Zipes, 1986: 5). This critical stance has translated into a plethora of transformed fairy tales, the so-called new feminist fairy tales that break the boundaries and propose realignments in the forms of socialization of the characters and by extension in readers.

Moreover, as has been demonstrated repeatedly by psychologists and educators, stories and fairy tales “do influence the manner in which children conceive the world and their place in it

even before they begin to read (Zipes, 1986: xii). As a result, classic folktales, such as “Cinderella”, have played a important role in the early socialization of children. “For instance, upon hearing a fairy tale, children of four or five will ‘assimilate the story to their past experiences of similar tales, providing themselves with expectations about things such as types of characters, patterns of behavior, and suitable endings. On the other hand, their understanding of ‘fairy tales’ will be somewhat altered and expanded by the new characters and actions which they meet in the particular tale.’ As a key agent of socialization, the fairy tale enables the child to discover his or her place in the world and to test hypotheses about the world” (Zipes, 1986: xii). In times past, when the child’s world as well as that of adults was limited by living purely in orality, these tales played a key role in reinforcing and/or altering the cultural conceptualizations and expectations of the collective in question.<sup>40</sup>

There is related a question that needs to be asked about literary fairy tales, such as Perrault’s “Cinderella” (ATU 425A) and Apuleius’ “Cupid and Psyche” as well as others less literarily conceived, i.e., those with more of an authentic oral stamp to them, tales such as ATU 301, classified broadly as “The Three Stolen Princesses” and known informally as “The Bear’s Son Tale” and “John the Bear”. Should they be viewed as deriving from an original single shared interpretive framework that was grounded in a worldview with an animist relational ontology? If so, this would mean that over time the plot of each of these tale types has been readjusted, a process that involved multiple accretions, elements being added and subtracted, modified and reshaped across time.<sup>41</sup>

In this study I have maintained that rather than being retold against an unchanging backdrop of shared values and beliefs held in common by the communities involved in their transmission, these tales were constantly subjected to the winds of change. As a result, the gradual reshaping of worldview of storytellers and their audiences left a subtle imprint on the variants that developed from a given tale type. And this overall process of reinterpretation means that the structure of the tales, rather than being unitary and set in stone, rests on an amalgamation of overlapping interpretive frames, some much older than others. These frames of understanding are often inextricably merged and therefore intertwined in the texts themselves. They do not appear neatly stacked one on top of the other. It is not if the frames were laid down separately and kept discrete across time creating the kind of stratigraphy familiar to archaeologists. Consequently, it is not a simple task to identify them and bring them clearly into view.

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<sup>40</sup> For a much more in-depth analysis of what Zipes refers to as the dark side of our classical fairy tale heritage and its role in the modern Western civilizing process, cf. Zipes (1983, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> For additional discussions of a theoretical nature concerning these processes of adaptation, cf. Honko (2013 [1981]), Kampinnen (2014), Bahna (2015).

When faced with the task of trying to tease out these older layers of shared interpretive frames from the newer ones, a different approach has been required. Instead of starting with the modern Western worldview as our lens, a frame of understanding replete with asymmetric dualities, such as the strict culture/nature opposition, the sharp human/animal divide and the implicit human exceptionalism, we have been aided by the work that has been done on Native American narratives. This comparative framing has drawn on traditional stories informed by the animist relational ontology that characterizes much of the research that has been carried out on Native peoples for whom bears are conceptualized as ancestors and kin (Hallowell, 1926; Mather, 2019, 2020; Speck, 1945; Wallace, 1949).

By relying on the Native American materials, we have been able to draw certain analogies. When the two datasets have been compared, the cross-cultural approach has brought into sharper relief the Western frames of understanding, those based on these asymmetric dualisms and showed how they have acted as mechanisms for interpreting the European tales. At the same time gaining a familiarity with the worldview embedded in the Native American stories allowed us to perceive in the European folktales remnants of an older animist relational ontology in which the belief that bears were ancestors and kin was still present. And this comparative approach made visible an indigenous European ethnocultural substrate that until now has gone unnoticed. And along with it, we discovered a female character who was an active agent in shaping her own destiny, a model far different from the passive, helpless and submissive Cinderella waiting for her prince to come, an image familiar to us all.

In this investigation, what we also have been able to do is discover the fact that details integral to the plot of one tale type can show up in another tale type. In some instances, we came across examples of blends in which the plots of two tale types were fused together, as was the case of the Male Cinderella stories. And those blends, as has been suggested, indicate that in the past the storytellers were familiar with the Bear's Son tale when it still contained the Spirit Animal Helpers as well as with the tales that had a female character interacting with a bear-husband and going on a pilgrimage to Glass Mountain.

## **11.0 A Closer Look at Glass (Crystal) Mountain**

Over the course of this study, we have seen the way a location referred to as Glass Mountain or Crystal Mountain was repeatedly alluded to in the tales. Because of the way that it was contextualized we can see it was also linked to the notion of a journey or pilgrimage. But so far, we have not pursued an answer to the following questions. Was there ever a real physical location associated with that name? And then there is this ancillary question: if so, was that location linked to the notion of pilgrimage? Finally, an additional query can be added to the

previous two: is there evidence at such a site which would explain why in the case of the Male Cinderella tale type elements from the Bear's Son tale became intertwined with features belonging to the tale type "The Search for the Lost Husband"? For the answer to that question to be in the affirmative, we would need to identify physical features at the site which, along with legends surrounding the same location, coincide with salient structural elements in the plot of each of the two tales.

But before we delve into the possibility that we are on the trail of a real mountain, we need to analyze more closely the connotations projected by the two adjectives used to describe this summit in the tales themselves, namely, the words 'glass' and 'crystal'. In the first instance, the choice of 'glass' calls forth images of something that is as smooth—slick as glass—and by extension when applied to a mountain slope, a surface that would be difficult to climb. From another angle, however, 'glass' suggests the idea of something transparent, shiny or crystal-like. The latter connotation is overtly expressed by the descriptor 'crystal', while that word can also evoke the idea of ice and snow. And that, in turn, calls to mind the image of a slick surface which is an integral structural element of the tales themselves. For example, the characters sometimes were given special equipment that better allowed them to scale the mountain.

At one level, in all these images what is functioning is a kind of metaphor by which the meanings attached to the terms 'glass' and 'crystal' are used to emphasize the difficult nature of the terrain as well as to allude to the magical properties of the site itself. What has not been seriously contemplated, however, is the possibility that what initially motivated of the use of these terms was not any type of literary license, but rather the geomorphology of the summit of a mountain that really existed. What will be explored in this section is whether there is a real place out there in the real world that corresponds to these literary allusions and, much earlier, motivated them, that is, rather than it being a place existing only in the imagination of storytellers and their audiences.

In other words, what if the mountain in question was, indeed, a formation totally unique because of its geomorphology? More concretely, what if it stood out from all other locations because it was composed, quite literally, of crystal or at least its closest equivalent: pure white semi-crystalline quartz? If so, the use of the adjective 'crystal' to describe the site would not have been due to some whimsical flight of fancy on the part of storytellers, but rather to the striking nature of the natural formation itself. And, furthermore, this would suggest that even when the exact physical location of the site was no longer accessible to the storytellers, the stories themselves continued to speak of it. Eventually the site would take on a totally mythological character for both the storytellers and their audiences. Indications that the tales generated conceptions of a sacred geography in the minds of the non-literate has been

demonstrated in the case of the Hungarian storyteller Lajos Ámi. Nevertheless, the mental map he drew in his mind, at least as represented by Erdész (1961), did not have enough detail for us to pinpoint where this Crystal Mountain, understood as a real place, might have been located. However, that it was considered a real place by that man is obvious.



**Figure 9.** Pico Sacro in the distance. Source: By Luis Miguel Bugallo Sánchez (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Lmbuga>) - Self made.  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Pico\\_Sacro\\_Galicia\\_001.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Pico_Sacro_Galicia_001.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1270727>.

We can now look at a concrete location, that of a mountain called Pico Sacro located in Galicia, 12 kilometers from the town of Santiago de Compostela, the destination of hundreds of thousands of tourists each year. Some 347,000 visited the location in 2019 alone. The peak itself is not particularly remarkable in terms of its height for it stands only 533m above sea level.

Figure 10. A view from the very top of Pico Sacro. Source: <https://arenariacoordinacion.com/picosacro/>.



Nonetheless, from the summit of the peak the visitor gains access to an expansive panoramic view that extends 30km. Still its physical dimensions are not particularly noteworthy when compared to the towering peaks found in other locations of Europe. But the site has another quite remarkable feature that undoubtedly caught the attention of people in times past, namely, its geomorphology. Pico Sacro forms part of a quartz dyke 17 km long, 2 km wide and 400 m deep, elongated from north-west to south-east. Pico Sacro is the most representative visual element of this quartz dyke while the quartz itself is characterized by its extreme whiteness and purity (Vaqueiro Rodríguez, 2004: 254).<sup>42</sup>

This unique characteristic of Pico Sacro had already caught the attention of geologists by the early part of the nineteenth century. For example, Guillermo Schultz, after visiting the site, sent a letter to the Société géologique de France, published in 1834, in which he reported his findings (Schultz, 1834: 416): “The remarkable cone of the Pico-Sagro [sic], with its elongated crest, measuring a mile and a half in length, and traversed by the river Ulla, is composed of white semi-crystalline quartz, and quartz-hyalin” (cited in Howes, 1925a: 140). The striking whiteness of the quartz can be appreciated in this Google Earth photograph from 2015. This image not only shows the rugged peak of Pico Sacro but also the exposed surface of the quartz left from a

<sup>42</sup> This promotional video about the Mina de Serrabal provides excellent view of the quartz in situ as well as its amazing whiteness. By scrolling down, different sorts of quartz can be seen. Cf. <https://www.serrabal.com/en>.



mining operation by the company Serrabal which is the largest quartz exploitation within the Pico Sacro vein.



**Figure 11.** Google Earth image of Pico Sacro (2015) showing the exposed vein of quartz from the Mina de Serrabal located 3kms to the southeast of the peak itself.

The mining operation itself goes back to 1968. Since then, quartz for different industrial uses has been extracted from the site; the highest purity (silicon metal) is used in the manufacture of photovoltaic panels, while the medium-high quality quartz is used in the production of ferrosilicon, whose final destination is the steel industry. The annual production of this mine is of the order of 300,000 tons, not counting the aggregates for construction that are also produced here. In short, the output of the mine gives an idea of the wealth of quartz at the site itself. It is one of the most important quartz mines in the world due to the quality and quantity of its reserves. The name of the mine, discovered in 1968 by three Galicians, comes from combining their surnames, SEñarís, RAma and BALboa, giving Serrabal. They found the vein of quartz while exploring the area around Pico Sacro in search of "seixo" (from the Galician word meaning "hard white rock") of good quality.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Cf. <https://www.mindat.org/loc-407144.html>.

**Figure 12.** A satellite image showing the location and extent of Mina de Serrabal. The circular insert is where Pico Sacro is located. Source: <https://mapcarta.com/N7045311886>.



At the beginning of the twenty-first century a thorough survey of Pico Sacro was carried out by a team of Galician geologists using modern equipment and technology (Groba González & Vaqueiro Rodríguez, 2004). They confirmed the unique properties of this extensive dyke of quartz. They also explored the cave located not far from the summit, at 514m above sea level. It, too, turned out to be a unique geological feature in that it is the only natural cave in the world formed out of quartz, at least that has been recorded to date. The entrance to the cave named O Cova do Pico leads to an impressive nearly vertical shaft, 120 meters deep. The main shaft is natural, although a second entrance was created in recent times in a futile effort to find the treasure supposedly buried at the very bottom of the hole.

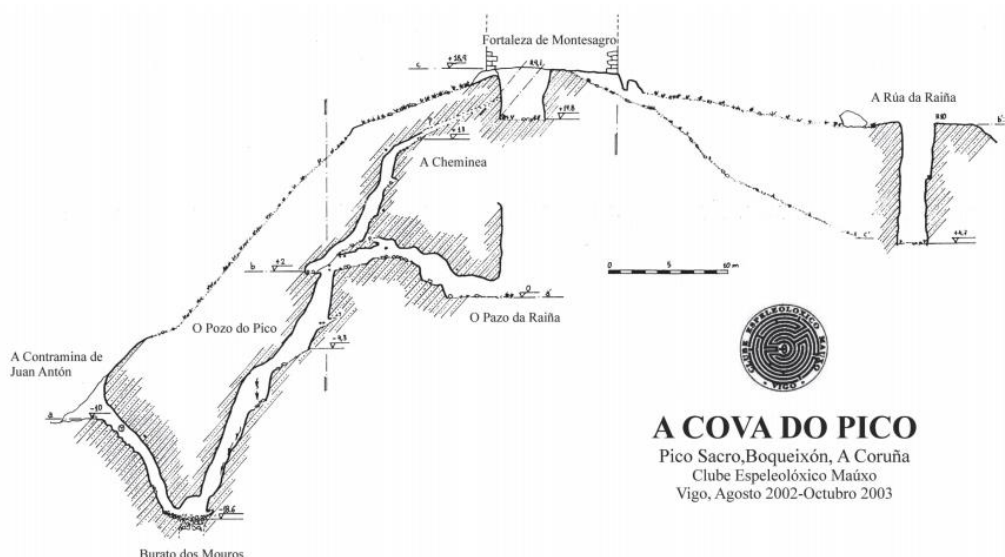


Figure 13. Diagram of the entrance to the cave and its shaft. Source: Vaqueiro Rodríguez (2004: 259).

The cave near the summit and the adjoining nearly vertical shaft have a purely natural origin which is due to the presence of zones of fracture. These have affected the quartz and favored its gradual erosion. That process has been aided by water from three springs near the top. As the water would leak downward along these major tectonic fractures, the deep shaft was carved out.



Unquestionably, in times past those visiting this cave and peering down into the dark depths of the apparently bottomless shaft would have been impressed by the place, and more so because of way the light from their torches would have lit up the glittering surface of the quartz walls. As is well documented, visitors regularly tossed stones down the shaft to hear the eerie sound reverberating back to them and prove that, in fact, the shaft didn't go on forever.

The location of the entrance to O Cova do Pico tucked into the mountainside can be appreciated in this photo:

Figure 14. Pathway leading to the cave entrance, the latter surrounded by outcrops of semi-crystalline quartz: Source : [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pico\\_Sacro\\_-\\_Cova\\_-\\_Cueva\\_-\\_Cave\\_-\\_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pico_Sacro_-_Cova_-_Cueva_-_Cave_-_02.jpg).



The cave entrance when viewed from the inside is also quite impressive:



**Figure 15.** (below) Looking out from inside the entrance. Source: <https://www.galiciamaxica.eu/galicia/a-coruna/covapico/>.

As has been stated, different types of quartz are found at this site, including quartz hyalin which is undoubtedly the most eye-catching. The following photos of samples of the type of quartz found in the vein give us an idea of what earlier visitors would have seen when they entered the cave.

**Figure 16.** Samples of hyalin crystal from the Serrabal mine. © Joan Rossell. Rosellminerals.com. Source: <https://www.mindat.org/loc-407144.html>.



We can never know for sure what the effect was on those who, several millennia ago, first caught a glimpse of this mountain of quartz way off in the distance. Nevertheless, we do have a testimonial, published in 1610, concerning the effect that it had on one visitor. The work in question is a 972-page tome penned by Galician priest Mauro Castellà Ferrer, called *Historia del Apostol de Iesus Christo Sanctiago Zebedeo Patron y Capitan general de Las Españas*. Castellà Ferrer speaks of how the original name of the site, that is, Monte Illicino, was changed to Monte Sacro after the remains of St. James were discovered nearby. This name change was to commemorate the ‘sacred’ nature of the site. And given that the word used for this type of a mountain in Galician is ‘pico’, its name became ‘Pico Sacro’. The Galician priest describes it as “a very high peak, one of the most prominent in all of Galicia, topped by a steep rock, completely covered by small crystal points, and those that are to the East, at noon are more resplendent” (Castellà Ferrer, 1610).<sup>44</sup>

Even according to contemporary reports, when the rays of the noon sun hit the quartz outcroppings, the effect is magical. Certainly, in times past when the degree of pollution was less and on days when the atmospheric conditions were favorable, the visually striking character of Pico Sacro would have been even more impressive. Therefore, using the word ‘crystal’ to capture that shimmering visual effect would have been quite appropriate. Even though we cannot tell when that adjective came into use as a descriptor for the mythical mountain appearing in the folktales, we find that it is also evidenced in folk belief and social practices, e.g., the custom of actual burials with bear claws. And it is associated with the summit that the soul must climb to successfully reach Paradise.

Although the chronological depth of the utilization of the descriptors of ‘crystal’ and ‘glass’ cannot be determined, the fact that it is a motif that is extensively documented across much of Europe, implies that there was some sort of mechanism which allowed for the continued transmission of the image. In other words, something was operating that allowed the memory of the remarkable nature of the site to persist across time. As we have seen, it appears to have been intertwined with an older animist worldview. Another factor that kept it alive and circulating might have been a tradition of pre-Christian pilgrimages. These, however, eventually would have been absorbed into the later tradition of Christian-based pilgrimages and redirected to a location nearby, that is, to Santiago de Compostela.

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<sup>44</sup> “Es este Monte muy alto, uno de los mas eminentes de toda Galizia, rematase en una roca acutissima, toda llena de puntas de Cristal chiquitas, y las que están a las partes del Oriente, y medio día son más resplandecientes [...]” (Castellà Ferrer, 1610).

**Figure 17.** A photo by a contemporary visitor (Trevor Huxham), taken in 2014 from the top of Pico Sacro, looking east towards Santiago de Compostela and in which the impressive panoramic view of the surrounding countryside can be appreciated. Source: <https://www.trevorhuxham.com/2014/01/hiking-pico-sacro-outside-of-santiago.html>.



## 12.0 Commentary on an ingenious hagiographic story

Now that the folktales themselves have been analyzed, the results shed an unexpected light on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela and its possible pre-Christian origins, particularly as they relate to Pico Sacro. According to the pious and carefully crafted tale that slowly came together over several centuries, the remains of St. James were miraculously rediscovered in the ninth century, after having laid abandoned in an unknown tomb for some 800 years. Because the official story is chock full of marvelous happenings, incredible feats, chance encounters, inexplicable discoveries, all of which is complimented by a mixed cast of historical, legendary and purely fictional characters, it is worth taking a closer look at the way that the remarkable tale came together.

As has been the case with the fairytales discussed in this study, the authorship of the story about the origins of the pilgrimage route of St. James must be understood to have been a collective enterprise with a series of people playing the role of storytellers across many generations. At the same time, just as is the case with the fantastic and truly unbelievable twists

and turns that characterize the plot of fairytales, this story, too, demands a suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience. However, since the story is cast in religious terms, feats that would otherwise be rejected as impossible, are presented as feasible and when need be, written off as miracles. Nevertheless, we cannot know whether those who were put together the narrative believed in what they were reporting as true or, conversely, whether they were quite conscious of the fact that they were making up a story that had no foundation whatsoever in fact. Today in our more secularized society, there is increased recognition that the tale from beginning to end is an elaborate invention, albeit a pious one.

Over the centuries much of the research carried out on the origins of the pilgrimage route has concentrated on identifying early textual references to St. James having travelled from the Holy Land to Hispania during his lifetime, even though today it is recognized that this allegation was at best wishful thinking on the part of the authors. Supposedly St. James preached the gospel in these Hispanic lands, but unhappy with his lack of missionary success, went back to Judea. By the eighth century the legend about the Apostle St. James the Greater having travelled about in Spain was a firmly established part of the Latin James' tradition (van Herwaarden, 1980: 18). As Melczer (1993: 12) has noted, apart from a few differing inflections "by the end of the seventh century and to a further degree by the eighth, James, became by and large, accepted as the evangelizer of Spain, and his return to the Holy Land was tacitly understood in order to square with his proselytizing activities in Hispania with the evangelical account of his martyrdom in Judea."

Shortly after his return to the Holy Land, he was martyred, beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I in 44 AD. While there is general agreement among Biblical scholars concerning the place where the death of St. James the Greater took place, i.e., Jerusalem, there is far less agreement over his burial place with some authorities naming it was in the Mount of Olives. Some old Greek sources spoke of his remains having been buried in the city called Marmarikes, using the toponym *εν πόλει της μαρμαρικές* (*en polei tes Marmarikes*). With the passing of time the toponymic designation gradually became corrupted, turning first into *archaia marmarica*, and from there into *arce marmarica* and finally into *in arcis marmaricis* or *sub arcis marmaricis*. "The corruption occurred not merely on the literal but also on the conceptual level: the toponym ended up being understood as a designation for an architectural description, a marble tomb under an arch, possibly a vaulted chamber" (Melczer, 1993: 14).

The next element used to fill in the backstory concerns a textual comment interpreted as speaking of the Apostle having been buried somewhere in Galicia. Descriptions of his burial included a corrupted reference to a tomb made of marble under an arch. And this detail resulted

from the faulty transmission of the original Greek when the expression was incorrectly translated into Latin. Nevertheless, this interpretation would catch on and persist for centuries. For instance, the medievalist López Alsina cites several works from the High Middle Ages that refer to the place where Santiago was buried using the expression *locus arcis marmoricis* and to his burial itself as *sub arcis marmoricis*, that is, ‘under marble arches’ (López Alsina, 1988).<sup>45</sup> The migration of the old Greek toponymic reference from one language to another and its transformation into a concrete description of the tomb of St. James that would be discovered 800 years after his death and burial, is another example of how a certain detail can be resistant to change, much like the way that the references to something made of ‘glass’ kept resurfacing in the fairytales analyzed in this study.

Here we are talking about the burial site of Santiago purportedly discovered in the ninth century. Naturally, for the narrative to be coherent, his burial could only have taken place after the miraculous *translatio* (transfer) of his martyred body from Judea had been accomplished, a feat that would be carried out by two of his devout disciples, a topic that we will discuss in detail shortly. However, the problem of the translation of his body was a matter that had already been addressed by a number of ninth-century texts that would serve to shore up this part of the narrative:

Ado of Vienne, in his revision of the *Martyrologium* of Florus of Lyons, as well as in the *Libellus de festivitibus SS Apostolorum*, both mid-century text, speaks of the translation of the remains of James to Spain, their burial close to the British sea—this cannot be anywhere but in Galicia—and their subsequent veneration: *Hujus beatissimi apostoli sacra ossa ad Hispanias translata et in ultimum earum finibus, vedelicet contra mare Brittanicum condita, celeberrima illarum gentium veneration excoluntur*” [The sacred bones of this most blessed apostle transferred to Hispanic lands, and deposited in the remotest parts of them, namely, facing the British Sea, are honored with the most celebrated veneration by those people.] (Melczer, 1993: 12-13).<sup>46</sup>

However, these ninth-century texts leave the location geographically vague, “facing the British Sea” or somewhere in the remotest parts of Hispania. Even though the text does mention

<sup>45</sup> Cf. also [https://xacopedia.com/arcis\\_marmoricis](https://xacopedia.com/arcis_marmoricis).

<sup>46</sup> Another similar oft-cited sentence is “*Huius sacratissima ossa ab Ierosolimis ad Hispanias translata, et in ultimis earum finibus condita, celeberrima illarum gentium veneratione excoluntur*” [“His most sacred bones were transferred from Jerusalem to Spain [Hispania], and deposited in the remotest parts of its territories, [where] they [the bones] were made famous by the veneration of their people”]. “Up to now it has been generally accepted that this mention comes from Ado of Vienne (about 804 to 875), who refers to James’ grave in Spain in his revision of the *Martyrologium* of Florus of Lyons (about 900-60) [...] The facts of the case are obscure here; their elucidation depends on the manuscript tradition of these sources. The original version of Florus of Lyons’ *Martyrologium* has disappeared [...]; Ado’s, dateable to between 850 and 859 [...] has been handed down in a revised form. In the Migne text of the *Libellus de festivitibus SS Apostolorum* ascribed to Ado, the grave of St. James in Spain is mentioned in addition to the entry on St. James’ day, 25 July: *Hujus beatissimi apostoli sacra ossa ad Hispanias translata et in ultimum earum finibus, vedelicet contra mare Brittanicum condita, celeberrima illarum gentium veneration excoluntur* [...]” (van Herwaarden, 1980: 19-20).



that his tomb was being venerated, it does not specify the site in question. Nonetheless, since the date when the purported discovery was made is also left vague, sometime between 818 to 842, according to Fletcher's calculations (1984: 57-60), it is possible that these early texts were informed by the writer having heard of the discovery of the Apostle's remains not far from the coast of Galicia.

As far as I can ascertain, prior to the discovery of the remains of St. James which allegedly took place in the ninth century, there was nothing of real significance at the location of what is today the town of Santiago de Compostela which would have set it apart from other similar locations. While evidence of burials associated with a cemetery, possibly a Christian one, was found when excavating the altar of the Cathedral, there are other necropolis available dating from the Roman era and later, locations that that the inventors of the tale could have chosen. For example, Blanco-Torrejón discusses 48 cemeteries that have been identified and excavated in this area of Galicia, dating from the first century BC to the sixth century AD. She cites the results of excavations in the Cathedral of Santiago as dating from III, IV and V century AD (Blanco-Torrejón, 2018). Furthermore, archaeological excavations suggest that the cemetery in question had been abandoned for several centuries at the time of the alleged discovery (Suárez Otero, 2020).

Viewed objectively, the narrative that we are asked to believe is quite outlandish, although it is certainly furnished with dramatic scenes that would have captured the imagination of the listener. For example, there is the riveting description of Pelagius the Hermit<sup>47</sup> being guided to the sepulcher site by the appearance of stars and strange lights. Naturally, the bizarre nature of these otherworldly signs called for an official confirmation of their meaning. And this comes in the form of an authoritative visit by Bishop Theodomir of Iria Flavia, who after examining the remains certifies them as being those of St. James and his two disciples who are buried nearby.

Also cited as Pelagio, Pelayo, Payo and Paio, this character plays the role of the hermit who perceives a series of unusual signs that lead to the discovery of the tomb of the Apostle. Whereas this episode of the narrative may have begun to circulate orally shortly after the purported discovery of the tomb, the earliest written evidence for it for isn't found until more than two centuries later in the *Concord of Antealtares* (1077). That text states that "in the time of the most

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<sup>47</sup> The only evidence in support of the existence of this individual rests in the narrative itself, over the centuries, the story has taken on legendary proportions and has been recounted repeatedly. And in doing so, its exclusively narrative origins are ignored. Today websites on the Internet act endlessly as did anonymous storytellers in times past, reaffirming to the cyber community audience the truth of this aspect of the narrative, and consequently acting as an echo chamber for what is nothing more than a popular legend. Cf. for example, [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ermita%C3%B1o\\_Pelayo](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ermita%C3%B1o_Pelayo).

serene King Don Alfonso, called the Chaste [765-842], an anchorite named Paio who lived near the tomb of the Apostle, had a revelation by means of angels.” It is then added that the vision was manifested to him by a series of unusual luminaries at a place nearby. The faithful of his church also perceived the prodigy, so they notified the bishop of Iria Flavia, Theodomir, who ended up certifying that it was the tomb of Santiago ([MR], 2015).

The document drawn up in 1077 constitutes the oldest source in which the discovery of the tomb of Santiago and the beginnings of the construction of the Romanesque Compostela cathedral in 1075 are recounted.<sup>48</sup> The vested interests on the part of those who redacted this document in the relics of Santiago are reflected in the fact that the purpose of the *Concord of Antealtares* was to establish an agreement between the rectors of the Compostela cathedral, headed by Bishop Diego Peláez, and the immediate convent of San Pedro de Antealtares, represented by Abbot Fagildo. These two institutions were largely responsible, since the discovery of the tomb, for the care of the relics of Santiago and for his worship. The *Concord* reveals that before the construction of the cathedral, the monks of the convent had had the responsibility of permanently praying to the Apostle, for which they received half of the offerings intended for his altar. At that time they agreed to temporarily stop receiving such income and in practice they never recovered it again. The emolument had, among other things, allowed the new head to enlarge the apostolic sepulcher as a destination for pilgrimages.

The first extant narration of the discovery is linked to the attempts to clarify in detail the privileges that Antealteres had over the cult of the Apostle since the time of the origins of the town of Compostela. As part of that effort the *Concord* includes an explanatory introductory text in which the discovery or *inventio* of the tomb is narrated for the first time and in which the figure of Paio appears. The summary of the narration as recounted in the text is as follows:

after remembering that the body of Santiago was buried in Galicia, it is said that it remained hidden until the time of Bishop Theodomir of Iria Flavia, when a hermit named Paio observed some luminaries that soon caught the attention of the people. nearby and the aforementioned prelate, who after a few days of fasting preparing for the revelation, confirms that it is the tomb of St. James the Elder. King Alfonso II the Chaste is notified of what has happened and he goes to see the tomb and immediately orders three places to be erected for worship. They are the churches of Santiago and San Juan Bautista, which was later lost, and

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<sup>48</sup> The date of the *Concord of Antealtares* (1077) coincides with a period of great activity in Santiago. For example, the construction of the present cathedral had begun two years earlier, in 1075, under the reign of Alfonso VI of Castile (1040–1109) and the patronage of bishop Diego Peláez. Although the construction had to be halted several times, according to the *Liber Sancti Iacobi*, the last stone was laid in 1122. But the last touches to its construction of the cathedral led to it no being completely finished until 1211 when it was consecrated in the presence of King Alfonso IX of Leon. The city became an episcopal see in 1075 and the church its cathedral. Then a quarter of a century later, due to its increasing importance as a place of pilgrimage, it was raised to an archiepiscopal see by pope Urban II in 1100.

the monastery of Antealtares, for the custodial monks, whose rights in this regard are established by the monarch himself. ([MR], 2015)

A slightly different version of this dramatic encounter is found in the *Historia Compostelana*, a work that appeared shortly after the more well-known compilation *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, a multi-authored text also known as the *Codex Calixtinus*, composed between 1130 and 1140 and in which this episode is barely mentioned. The Latin name of *Historia Compostelana* is *De rebus gestis D. Didaci Gelmirez, primi Compostellani Archiepiscopi*. It is an anonymously written historical chronicle of multiple authorship, unique in its narration of narrating contemporary events and utilizing historical documents which were inserted into the text, all of which gives it great historical value. It was a work commissioned by Diego Gelmírez and intended to highlight his role. Gelmírez was the second bishop (1100–1120) then the first archbishop (1120–1140) of Santiago de Compostela. The narrative of the *Historia Compostelana* spans the years of Gelmírez' tenure (Fletcher, 1984).. The purpose of the chronicle was clearly to extol the accomplishments of this man while establishing the foundation and rights of Santiago de Compostela, including its founding legend which is what interests here.

In this work the *inventio* or discovery of the sepulcher is described in significant detail. But no mention is made of Pelagius the Hermit being involved. Instead, their place is occupied by some unidentified men who we are assured were “people of great authority.” That Paio is not cited by the second essential text on the discovery, that is, the *Historia Compostelana*, might be explained by the fact that Bishop Diego Gelmírez did not consider it appropriate that the initial news of the discovery would be provided by a simple anchorite, despite the prestige that these characters had. Another possible reason for reassigning this role to individuals of greater eminence might be that for those who wrote the *Concord* (1077) inserting the figure of Pelagius the Hermit evoked someone completely dedicated to the contemplative life and prayer. Hence, for them this detail would have been intended to reinforce the value of the find. In contrast, in the case of *Historia Compostelana*, elaborated somewhat later, in the splendid 12th century, inserting the figure of a hermit no longer had the same value. And perhaps for this reason, Gelmírez attributes the discovery to “persons of great authority” who notified Bishop Teodomiro of the find.

Some men, people of great authority, contacted the said bishop (Theodimir) saying they had often seen luminaires shining at night in the forest which, since so much time had elapsed, had grown up over the tomb of St. James, and that angels had appeared to them frequently there. When he (Theodimir) heard this, he himself went to the place where they claimed to have seen such things, and he actually observed with his own eyes the luminaries that were shining there. Inspired by divine grace, he went to the grove and looking

around carefully found among the bushes and undergrowth a small house with a marble tomb inside. (García Quintela, Santos Estévez, & Brañas Abad, 2008: 123).<sup>49</sup>

Even considering all these narrative flourishes, once again we are left with the enigma of why this location, in the shadow of Pico Sacro, was the site chosen for this miraculous and totally stunning discovery of the little house enclosing the marble sepulcher in which the body of the Apostle had been deposited 800 years earlier. As is obvious, the acceptance of the multifaceted narrative associated with St. James rests solidly on the belief in miracles rather than relying on the mere ‘suspension of disbelief’ which is what occurs when consuming a fairytale. In the case of fairytales, the reader is not expected to believe in the reality of the magical events described in the tale. In contrast, in the case of the narrative concerning St. James and the pilgrimage route to Santiago, whenever needed, the belief in ‘miracles’ is used to offset the contradictions in logic inherent in the story, that is, what would otherwise be viewed as lapses in reason. In short, such events are explained through recourse to divine intervention and the working of miracles. And as a result, in times past the otherwise quite unbelievable events making up the plot of the overall narrative were said to correspond to reality and hence rendered believable to the faithful.

The Santiago story along with the spurious documents used to shore it up has also relied on the reluctance on the part of those studying the phenomena to avoid pointing out the blatantly fictitious nature of the events narrated. Instead, researchers have studiously avoided critiquing the narrative itself, hedging their comments, instead of pointing out the absurdity of the events narrated. This has left the audience the Santiago story with only one alternative, that of accepting that the many named and unnamed individuals involved in first creating and later perpetuating the story across many centuries were all convinced that the episodes making up the plotline were factual renditions of past events. What is regularly left out is that even when news of the discovery of the remains of St. James began to spread, it was not received with open arms by the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy. Instead, they were those who were reluctant to give their imprimatur of approval to the claims being made, seeing them instead as an effort to promote the agenda and consequently the power and economic success of concrete groups of individuals (Fletcher, 1984: 79-82).

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<sup>49</sup> “Unos hombres, personas de gran autoridad, refirieron al mencionado obispo (Teodomiro) que habían visto muchas veces unas luminarias que brillaban de noche en el bosque que, por el mucho tiempo transcurrido, había crecido sobre la tumba de Santiago, y que allí se les habían aparecido ángeles con frecuencia. Cuando escuchó esto, él mismo se dirigió al lugar donde ellos aseguraban que habían visto tales cosas, y efectivamente contempló con sus propios ojos las luminarias que brillaban allí. Inspirado pues, por la divina gracia, se dirigió al referido bosquillo y mirando alrededor con cuidado se encontró entre los arbustos y malezas una pequeña casa que tenía dentro una tumba de mármol...” (García Quintela et al., 2008: 123).

Let us assume for a moment that the choice of this specific location in Galicia was motivated by those who were intent on promoting the Christian narrative associated with St. James concerning his having preached in Hispania during his lifetime, and were keen on exploiting it for their own benefit as well as that of others and, acting collectively, to increase their base of power and prestige. Recognizing that they had many locations to choose from if all they were looking for was an abandoned cemetery, we can ask whether they realized that Pico Sacro was already a site frequented by pagan pilgrims and venerated by them. If the founders of the hagiographic legend were aware that Pico Sacro was already shrouded in a form of sacrality, then they might also have realized that choosing a site nearby for the discovery of the remains of St. James could afford them an opportunity to capitalize on a site with already well-established social practices and beliefs linked to it. At the same time situating the tomb a short distance away from the original pilgrimage location would have created an attraction allowing for them to slowly redirect the traffic to the new Christian site away from the slopes of the mountain and whatever might have been being venerated there.

As in much of Western Europe, the Galician megaliths are of various kinds, dolmens, alignments of standing stones and menhirs, and they are not uncommon across much of the region, including areas around Pico Sacro. In this respect, Fleure (Peake, 1919: 208) was the first to suggest that there might be a connection between the cult of St. James and the megalithic culture of Western Europe.<sup>50</sup> However, supporting evidence is still lacking for his theory. Nevertheless, in 1923 Howes, following up on Peake's theory, published in 1919, went to Galicia and conducted fieldwork seeking to collect evidence in support of Peake's claim. In his 1925 article he wrote: "Throughout Galicia, and especially along the littoral, there is an abundance of stone monuments, which are objects of veneration, despite clerical admonitions, on the part of the peasantry. The belief in the curative powers of stones is widespread [...]" (Howes, 1925a: 133).<sup>51</sup> Howes, who fully supported Peake's earlier claim of a megalithic origin for the ritual importance of Pico Sacro, also stated the following: "Scattered all over its slopes are numbers of small stones, some in lines, others in circles, and a number of dolmens. Locally they are held to have been connected with druidical ritual, and even to-day are held in regard by the peasantry" (Howes, 1925a: 139).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Peake cites Fleure (1918: 91) as his source.

<sup>51</sup> In the same year Howes (1925b) published a second article detailing examples of the veneration of stones among the local populace.

<sup>52</sup> Howes was under the impression that Pico Sacro was 'sacred' because a gold mine was located on it, a theory that has been refuted by recent explorations of the cave itself. Cf. Groba González and Vaqueiro Rodríguez (2004: 31-34).

Howes expands on this veneration of rocks and stones that he had observed among the populace by citing beliefs directly linked to Pico Sacro:

Moreover, the Gallegan belief in the curative power of particular rocks and stones appears here in a special form. In most parts of the country peasants rub the affected part against a stone, but the cure is sought for in a different manner in the case of the Pico Sacro. Until quite recently it was customary for sick persons to make the ascent in order to place an offering of bread on the highest point they could reach. With eyes fixed on the summit the afflicted one would cry out the following:

“Picosagro! Picosagro! Sáname d’este mal qu’en trago” [“Pico Sacro, Pico Sacro, cure me of this sickness that I bear”].

He or she would depart in the firm belief that their malady would be cured. I am inclined to think that the very act of offering food to the mountain was an acknowledgement of the superior virtue of the holy peak over ordinary stones. The origin of the practice is evidently very ancient, and seems to bear out my contention that the Pico Sacro was early venerated. But I would go further than this. Having seen the mountain and studies MSS. relating to it, it is my belief that it was worshipped because it was productive of gold. (Howes 1925: 139-140)

However, Howes’ assertion is countered by the fact that no gold mine was ever present on the slopes of Pico Sacro. While the cave near the top generated a sense of wonder, it was the mountain itself that evoked feelings of sacrality. As Groba González & Vaqueiro Rodríguez (2004: 73) have shown, the cave of Pico Sacro has many legends attached to it. But the mountain itself is even more relevant in the traditional mentality of the local populace. In the opinion of these two contemporary researchers, for many people, Pico Sacro is sacred for one or more of the following reasons. The first derives from the mistaken belief in the existence of a Roman gold mine. The second is based on the legends surrounding St. James, the Răina Lupa as well as the dragon. And finally, there is the sacrality implicit in the popular beliefs and superstitions concerning this mountain.

Among the multiple references to these beliefs and superstitions, we have the following testimonies, one from the end of the nineteenth century and another from the beginning of the twentieth: “Our villagers attribute to Pico Sacro a certain extraordinary power and effectiveness; so that in some parts, when they are afflicted with some ailment, they go up to a place from which the prodigious mountain can be viewed, and greet it with these words: ‘Picosagro, Picosagro / sáname este mal que eu trago.’ The ceremony also requires that a crust of bread be taken and left at the site from where the Picosagro is greeted” (Fernández Sánchez & Freire Barreiro, 1885:438).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> “Nuestros aldeanos suponen en el Pico Sagro cierto poder y eficacia extraordinarios; así es que en algunas partes cuando se ven afligidos de alguna dolencia, suben a un lugar desde el que pueda descubrirse el prodigioso monte y lo saludan con estas palabras: ‘Picosagro, Picosagro / sáname este mal que eu trago’. El ceremonial exige además que se lleve una corteza de pan y que se deje en el sitio desde donde se saluda al Picosagro.” (Fernández Sánchez & Freire Barreiro, 1885:438)

Writing in 1928, Carré Aldao gives this report: “It is legion the number of those who still believe in the power of divinity possessed by the mountain. Many, countless, are the peasant people who when they are afflicted by ailments for which they find no remedy, seek out one of the many high locations found in much of the region that allow them to see Pico Sacro from a great distance, and full of faith in the mysterious power with which they believe it is endowed, they direct to it the following invocation: Pico Sagro, Pico Sagro / sáname de este mal que trayo” (Carré Aldao, 1928, II, 1058).<sup>54</sup>

There are several ways to explain the persistent belief in the curative powers of the peak of Pico Sacro itself. On the one hand, there is the deeply held veneration of rocks and stones found among the Galician populace which could reflect the way in which megalithic remains often have acted as sites that anchored the beliefs of the populace in space and time allowing for what the locals understood to be continuity with the past, even though that continuity was fictive. The appropriation of megalithic remains for use as assembly sites, at time viewing the stones as endowed with special powers, is well documented across Europe (Davill, 2004; O'Neill, 2005; Pantos & Semple, 2004). On the other hand, the belief in the prophylactic powers of Pico Sacro could have come about simply because of the way that the *Codex Calixtinus* portrayed this location as a backdrop for what happened to the two disciples of St. James as they sought to bury his remains. Consequently, praying to Pico Sacro could have become fused with the worship of Santiago himself. However, the prayers are directed to the mountain, not to the saint. The third possibility is that the belief in the curative powers of the peak could date back to earlier pre-Christian traditions.

As laid out in the early Church Councils, Christian authorities employed two basic strategies when it came to dealing with sites that were frequented and held in high esteem by the still unconverted population. One of the two lines of attack was to destroy the pre-Christian site outright and/or if that was not possible, prohibit anyone from going there. The first tactic was put forward repeatedly in edicts promulgated by the Church Councils held in France and Spain (Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 24-25). Starting in 452, a Council at Arles decreed that “if, in any diocese, any infidel either lighted torches or worshipped trees, fountains, or stones, or neglected to destroy them, he should be found guilty of sacrilege.”<sup>55</sup> About a century later, in 567, a

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<sup>54</sup> “Es legión la de los que creen aún en el poder de la divinidad enseñoreada del monte. Muchísimas, incontables, son las gentes campesinas que cuando se ven afligidas por dolencias a las que no encuentran remedio, concurren a una de las múltiples alturas que de gran parte de la región permiten descubrir el Pico Sagro a larga distancia, y llenos de fe en el misterioso poder de que le suponen dotado, le dirigen la siguiente invocación: Pico Sagro, Pico Sagro / sáname de este mal que trayo” (Carré Aldao, 1928, II, 1058)

<sup>55</sup> “Si in alicujus episcopi territorio infideles, aut faculas accendunt, aut arbores, fontes vel saxa venerentur si hoc erueri neglexerit, sacrilegii rerum se esset cognoscat.” Labbeum, iv, 1013 (cited in Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 24).

Council at Tours exhorts the clergy to excommunicate those who, at certain stones, trees or fountains, perpetuate things contrary to the ordinances of the Church.<sup>56</sup>

A century later, in 681, a Council held in Toledo admonishes those who worship idols, venerate stones, trees, or fountains and those who carry lights and torches to such assemblies. The writers of the 681 Council of Toledo alleged that such individuals were "sacrificing to the devil" and, consequently, were subject to various penalties (Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 24).<sup>57</sup> Another Council held at the same site, in the year 692, enumerates almost in the same words the various acts, designated as heretical, which were condemned by the preceding Council.<sup>58</sup> A Council at Rouen, about the same time, denounces all who offer vows to trees or stones or fountains as "they would at altars, or offer candles or gifts, as if any divinity resided there capable of conferring good or evil".<sup>59</sup> Lastly, there is the decree of Charlemagne, dated in Aix-la Chapelle, in 789, which utterly condemns and execrates the traditional gatherings which took place at what were probably quite often assembly sites where not just religious activities were being carried out but also others of a judicial-political nature: Charlemagne's decree reads: "Also, we expressly order that this very bad custom, abominable to God, concerning trees, stones or springs, where some fools assemble with lights or do other things, be eliminated and destroyed wherever it may be found."<sup>60</sup>

Documents prohibiting or attempting to restrict access to such sites of pre-Christian worship, including practices linked to the veneration of stones and leaving offerings at them, are repeatedly found throughout the centuries. The few mentioned here, focused primarily on the geographical zone of Spain and France, are sufficient to show that from Toledo to Aix-la-Chapelle, and from the departure of the Romans until the tenth century, and probably much later, the Christian priesthood and its authorized representatives were engaged in waging a continuous but apparently ineffectual warfare against the use of such assembly sites.

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<sup>56</sup> "Contestamur illam solitudinem tam pastores quam presbyteros, gerere ut quemcunque in hac fatuitate persistere viderint, vel ad nescio quas *petras* aut arbores vel fontes, designata loca gentilium perpetrare, quae ad ecclesiae rationem non pertinent cos ab ecclesia sancta auctoritate repellant." Baluz, vi, 1234. (cited in Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 24).

<sup>57</sup> "Cultores idolorum, veneratores *lapidum*, accensores facularum excolentes sacra fontium vel arborum admonemus, &c." Baluz, vi, 1234. (cited in Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 24).

<sup>58</sup> "Illi diversis suadelis decepti cultores idolorum efficiuntur, veneratores *lapidum*, accensores facularum, excolentes sacra fontium vel arborum, &c." Baluz, vi, 1337. (cited in Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 24).

<sup>59</sup> "Si aliquis vota ad arbores, vel fontes, vel ad *lapidus* quosdam, quasi ad altaria, faciat aut ibi candelam, seu quolibet munus deferet velut ibi quoddam Numen sit quod bonum aut malum possit inferre." Baluz, 1,2: 210. (cited in Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 25).

<sup>60</sup> "Item de arboribus vel *petris* vel fontibus ubi aliqui stulti luminaria vel aliquas observationes faciunt omnino mandamus, ut iste pessimus usus et deo execrabilis ubicunque invenitur tolletur et distruatur." Baluz, t. i, 235. (cited in Fergusson, [1872] 1976: 25).



According to Fergusson ([1872] 1976: 25-26):

The [Catholic] priests do not condescend to tell us what the forms of the Stones were which these benighted people worshipped, whether simple menhirs or dolmens, or *grottes des fées*, nor why they worshipped them [...]. Nor do they tell us what the form of worship was; they did not care, and perhaps did not know. Nor do we; for, except an extreme veneration for their dead, and a consequent ancestral worship, mixed with a strange adoration of Stones, Trees, and Fountains, we do not know now what the religion was of these rude people. [...] But what it does seem to prove is, that down to the 11th century the Christian Priesthood waged a continuous warfare against the veneration of some class of Rude Stone Monuments, to which the pagan population clung with remarkable tenacity.

The second approach taken by Church authorities was to appropriate the site, taking it over by a more subtle means, namely, by sprinkling some holy water on it and inventing a saint to keep watch over it and provide miraculous cures when needed. In this respect, as proof of the second tactic, we have the often-quoted letter sent by Pope Gregory to Abbot Mellitus, who was about to join Augustine in England, in the year 601. We know of the letter only through Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, written in 731. Gregory instructs Mellitus to convey to Bishop Augustine what he has been thinking in relation to the conversion of the local populace:

[T]ell him what I have long been considering in my own mind concerning the matter of the English people; to wit, that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let water be consecrated and sprinkled in the said temples, let altars be erected, and relics placed there. For if those temples are well built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and knowing and adoring the true God, may the more freely resort to the places to which they have been accustomed.<sup>61</sup>

This letter has been much cited: “those who wish to demonstrate the origins of traditional customs and lore in pagan times use it as a much-needed bridge across the societal chasm of Christianization; they take it to mean that the Church in England adopted a general policy of appropriation rather than confrontation, and from this basis argue for a large-scale survival of non-Christian elements within the Church and/or within society. It has become a key element in many modern interpretations of folklore.”<sup>62</sup> While the degree to which this tactic was used by the Church of England is unclear, that it was employed is unquestionable. Now when we turn our attention back to what happened with the purported discovery of the tomb of St. James, the approach that might have been utilized to Christianize the pre-existing beliefs and social practices appears to have been slightly different. First, if the reconstruction of events proposed here is correct, what was being preserved was a pre-Christian pilgrimage tradition to the slopes of Pico Sacro, a location that earlier might have acted as an assembly site.

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/bede/history.v.i.xxix.html>.

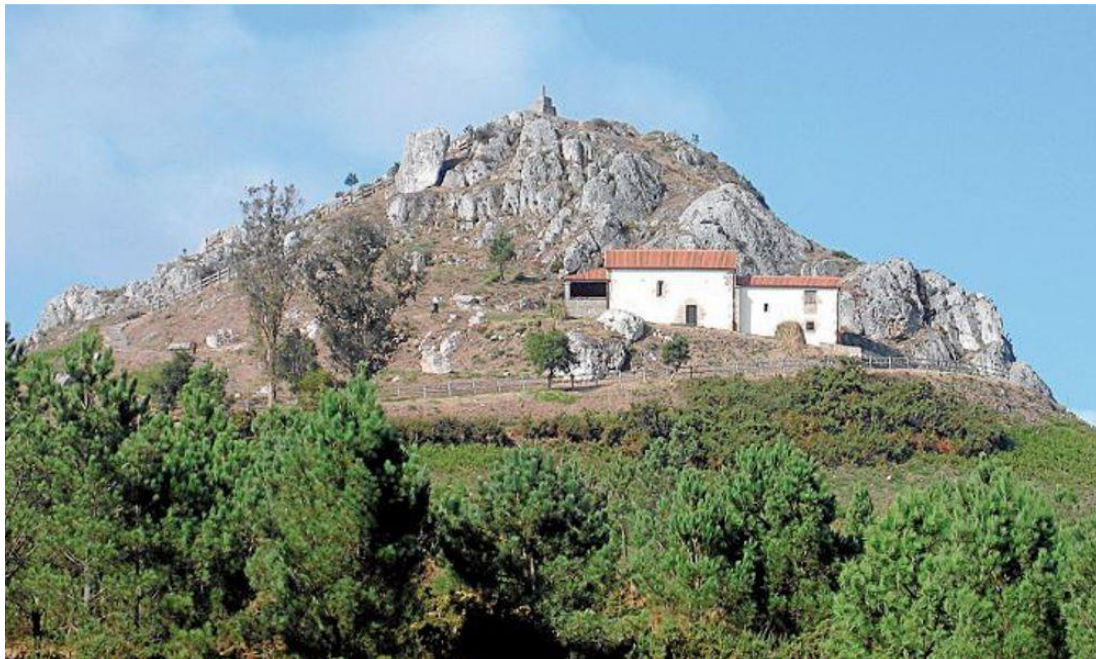
<sup>62</sup> Cf. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100337215>.

At this juncture it is not possible to determine whether places of worship or assembly sites were present earlier on Pico Sacro and subsequently destroyed. If that were the case, situating the tomb which was to be venerated by Christians at a location merely 12 kms away from Pico Sacro would have acted to direct visitors away from the former site. In this scenario, the remains of St. James would have ended up playing the role of the relics prescribed by Pope Gregory to replace the existing pagan idols. As a result, this tactic would have allowed for the appropriation of what appears to have been an already wide-spread pilgrimage tradition that may or may not have still been alive in the ninth century along with the veneration of Pico Sacro. Establishing the tomb of St. James nearby would have allowed for reorienting the footsteps of visitors first to the humble chapel said to be built in 829 by King Alfonso II of Asturias and Galicia (765–842), and two centuries later, to the great Romanesque Cathedral of Santiago whose construction started in 1075 and whose last stone was laid in 1122.

Leaving aside the evidence that we have discussed in relation to the presence of Glass Mountain in folktales, it is difficult to assess whether at the time the alleged discovery of the remains of St. James and his two disciples, whose names, we are told, were Anastasio and Teodoro, Pico Sacro was still attracting visitors of a pagan persuasion. Nevertheless, there are two sources that can be recruited to lend credence to that possibility. First, we have the fact that there was clearly outreach by those attached to the cult of St. James to extend the boundaries of the cult to the slopes of Pico Sacro itself. This effort consisted of constructing a chapel there dedicated to Santiago, consecrated by Bishop Sisnando in 899. Sisnando was also instrumental in establishing a Benedictine monastery, but one dedicated to Saint Sebastian, only fifteen years later, in 914, near the summit of Pico Sacro (Falque, 1994: 72). Information is lacking as to exactly how long the monks inhabited this structure although there appears to have been reasons of a secular nature for it having been abandoned by 1029 and falling into ruin. These reasons have been discussed by other researchers (Groba González & Vaqueiro Rodríguez, 2004: 141-144). What is well known is that later a chapel was built on the same site, quite literally atop the ruins of the previous monastic structure. The chapel itself was reconstructed in the eleventh and twelfth century and was known as the Chapel of Saint Sebastian, keeping the name attached to the previous monastic structure. This fact allows us to pinpoint the location where the ninth-century monastery was originally built, not far from the peak itself. The following images show that it would have been quite literally along the route taken by visitors seeking to reach the summit.



**Figure 18.** The Chapel of Saint Sebastian showing the road leading to the parking lot nearby. Source: [https://www.galiciamaxica.eu/galicia/picosacro/#google\\_vignette](https://www.galiciamaxica.eu/galicia/picosacro/#google_vignette).



**Figure 19.** The footpath to the top of the summit can be seen to the left of the image where a railing is visible. Source: [https://www.economiadigital.es/galicia/innovacion/mas-madera/inditex-promueve-un-proyecto-forestal-divulgativo-en-el-pico-sacro\\_544223\\_102.html](https://www.economiadigital.es/galicia/innovacion/mas-madera/inditex-promueve-un-proyecto-forestal-divulgativo-en-el-pico-sacro_544223_102.html).

There is also evidence that a hermitage was constructed at the very top of Pico Sacro in the eleventh century, replaced in the fifteenth century by a fortress. In summary, it is unclear exactly why this location was chosen for these multiple Christian initiatives which resulted in Pico Sacro being colonized by Christian edifices and for a time at least overrun with monks. In other words, we are not told what Sisnando's motives might have been for erecting these Christian outposts 12 kilometers away from the site where the first chapel was erected in 899 to commemorate the tomb of St. James. As to what was already in existence on these slopes prior to the introduction of the cult of Santiago, things are equally murky.

**Figure 20.** Photo of the Chapel of San Sebastian in which we can appreciate the strategic location for the current edifice and previously that of the Benedictine monastery for the site affords the viewer with an expansive view of the surrounding countryside. Source: [https://www.galiciamaxica.eu/galicia/picosacro/#google\\_vignette](https://www.galiciamaxica.eu/galicia/picosacro/#google_vignette).<sup>63</sup>



Much of the early part of the story tells of how, after St. James was beheaded in Jerusalem by King Herod Agrippa in 44 AD, his headless body was brought to Galicia in a rudderless boat with no sail, guided by angels. According to one persistent tradition, it was a stone boat, maybe even one constructed of the finest marble.<sup>64</sup> However, in pictorial representations of the

<sup>63</sup> For additional information on this Chapel and photos cf. <https://www.galiciamaxica.eu/galicia/a-coruna/sansebastian/>.

<sup>64</sup> The linkage between the disciples' sea voyage and a stone (or stones) first appears in the 12th century while the idea that the boat that transported the Apostle's remains was itself made of stone does not show up until 15th century, a topic that has been discussed extensively (Alonso, 1992; Andrade Cernadas, 2016: 143 and 153; Peake, 1919; Valentine & Valentine, 2005).



*translatio* the gruesome detail of the headless body is ignored, and St. James is shown up looking relatively healthy, often portrayed with a full beard (Figure 22).



Figure 21. Carved Panel on the Plaza de Fefiñáns, Cambados, commemorating the arrival of St. James's body in a stone vessel. Source: <https://www.ultreyatours.com/blog/the-legend-of-the-apostle-saint-james-life-burial/>.

Guided by the hand of divine providence, two of St. James' disciples, arrive with the remains of St. James at Iria Flavia (the town today called Padron) on the coast, after successfully crossing the Mediterranean Sea, navigating through the Straits of Gibraltar and up the Atlantic coast to the mouth of the river Ulloa. At that point, still with St. James's body in tow, the disciples run into the legendary Raiña Lupa, the Wolf Queen who controls that region of Galicia, and seek her permission to bury their charge on her lands which include Pico Sacro.

Figure 22. Embarkation of the boat with the remains of St. James (left). Translatio of the body of St. James in front of the palace of the Wolf Queen (right). A painting by Martín Bernat (1450–1505), executed between 1480 and 1490. Source: <https://atlasnmemosyne.blogspot.com/2018/03/embarque-traslado-del-cuerpo-del.html>.



Book III of the *Codex Calixtinus* contains a letter allegedly written by Pope Leo III in which we find the following discussion concerning how the two disciples of Santiago, in their efforts to find a burial place for their ward, seek out the help of the Raína Lupa. According to this narrative there was plenty of pagan activity going on in and around Pico Sacro. However, there is no way to know whether the events described reflect anything more than the fertile imagination of those who were charged with redacting this section of the *Codex*.

So, marching east, they move the sacred coffin to a small field of a certain lady named Lupa, which was about five miles from the city, and leave it there. Inquiring who was the owner of that land, they found out at the suggestion of some natives and tried vehemently and ardently to find the person they were looking for. Finally, going to meet the woman to talk to her, and telling her the story as it had unfolded, they ask her to give them a small temple where she had placed an idol to worship it, and which was also very crowded by the misguided believers in the absurd paganism.<sup>65</sup>

In this text the role played by the legendary queen is that of a foil, an opponent who eventually is convinced to convert to Christianity and destroy the pagan temple and idols.

The disciples end up on the slopes of Pico Sacro, at that point a peak still called Monte Ilicino. Although they are deceived several times by the powerful queen, they finally head off to bury the remains of St. James on the mountain peak only to discover that it is guarded by a dangerous dragon who inhabits a cave reaching deep into the earth. That dramatic scene is vividly described in Book III of the twelfth-century *Codex Calixtinus*, composed between 1130 and 1140, also known as *Liber Sancti Jacobi*. That multi-authored and lavishly illustrated volume reflects the concerted efforts of several generations of writers and illustrators to put forth the definitive foundational narrative of St. James as well to encourage pilgrimages to the site by including a massively detailed pilgrim's guide (Melczer, 1993).

Book III of the *Codex* which consists of the previously mentioned letter attributed to Pope Leo III, contains the official version of this part of the tale. The two disciples fail to perceive the deceptions of the Wolf Queen, and instead thank her and take leave. When they arrive at the mountain top, they

discover something different that they did not expect. Well, when stepping onto the boundaries of the mountain, suddenly an enormous dragon [...] coming out of its own lair, launches itself, throwing fire, at

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<sup>65</sup> “Emprendida, pues, la marcha hacia oriente, trasladan el sagrado féretro a un pequeño campo de cierta señora llamada Lupa, que distaba de la ciudad unas cinco millas, y lo dejan allí. Inquiriendo quién era el dueño de aquel terreno, lo averiguan por indicación de unos nativos y procuran vehemente y ardientemente encontrar a la que buscaban. Yendo, por último, al encuentro de la mujer a hablar con ella, y contándole el asunto tal como se desarrolló, le piden que les dé un pequeño templo en donde ella había colocado un ídolo para adorarlo, y que era también muy concurrido por los descarriados creyentes de la absurda gentilidad.” Source: <http://www.caminosantiagoencadiz.org/index/CodexCalixtinus/LibroIIICapI.html>.

the holy men [...], ready to attack them and threatening them with death. But remembering the doctrines of the faith, they impassively oppose him [with] the defense of the cross, they force him to retreat, facing him down and unable to resist the sign of the Lord's Cross, he bursts open from the middle of his belly.<sup>66</sup>

We might assume that the person who invented the narrative twist of turning the two disciples into expert dragon-slayers, albeit with the help of the Cross, thought that it would be well received by 12th century audiences, given the abundance of legends and tales already circulating in which a hero carried out a similar feat. The texts forming the basis of book III of the *Liber Sancti Iacobi* seem to indicate the person in charge was linked to Compostela its surroundings, probably a cleric interested in the particular traditions circulating in the area at the time the *Liber* was being composed. Including them in the text was a way of affirming the Compostela traditions themselves (Díaz y Díaz, 1988: 83, 89).

Rather remarkably there is a much older textual reference to the dragon discussed in Pope Leo's letter. The tradition about the dragon or serpent that inhabited Pico Sacro goes back to at least the year 914, for Bishop Sisnando already mentioned this mythical monster in the founding document of the monastery of San Sebastián de Picosagro, built near the top of the mountain. More than two centuries later the same monster shows up in the *Codex Calixtinus*, where it is described as "a huge dragon, for whose excursions the houses of the nearby villages were then deserted," that is, until he was defeated by the cross carried by the disciples of the Apostle. This tradition was maintained into the early twentieth century in some romances and local legends of oral tradition, which recount how a reptile keeps treasures hidden in the cave. That traditional belief has endured up until the present day, as has been noted, along with the rite of throwing stones inside of A Cova do Pico to kill the dragon (Almagro-Gorbea, 2013: 352).

In Pope Leo's epistle we learn that the disciples go to the castle of the malevolent pagan Wolf Queen. Soon afterwards she converts to Christianity and has all the pagan idols in her realm destroyed. Nearby, the disciples get to work constructing a sepulcher. "a magnificent piece of stonework, where the body of the Apostle is deposited with artful ingenuity."<sup>67</sup> However, when it comes time to speak of the exact location finally chosen by the two men to inter the

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<sup>66</sup> The full Spanish translation of the Latin original reads as follows: "Oyendo esto los apostólicos varones y sin percibir la hipocresía de la mujer, se marchan dando las gracias, llegan al monte y descubren algo distinto que no esperaban. Pues al pisar los linderos del monte, de pronto un enorme dragón, por cuyas frecuentes incursiones se hallaban entonces desiertas las viviendas de las aldeas próximas, saliendo de su propia guarida, se lanza, echando fuego, sobre los santos varones que ardían en amor de Dios, dispuesto a atacarlos y amenazándolos con la muerte. Mas acordándose de las doctrinas de la fe, oponen impávidamente la defensa de la cruz, le obligan a retroceder haciéndole frente y, al no poder resistir el signo de la Cruz del Señor, revienta por mitad del vientre." Source of the Spanish translation is: <http://www.caminosantiagoencadiz.org/index/CodexCalixtinus/LibroIIICapI.html>.

<sup>67</sup> "[...] se construye un sepulcro, magnífica obra de cantería, en donde depositan con artificioso ingenio el cuerpo del apóstol." Cf. <http://www.caminosantiagoencadiz.org/index/CodexCalixtinus/LibroIIICapI.html>.

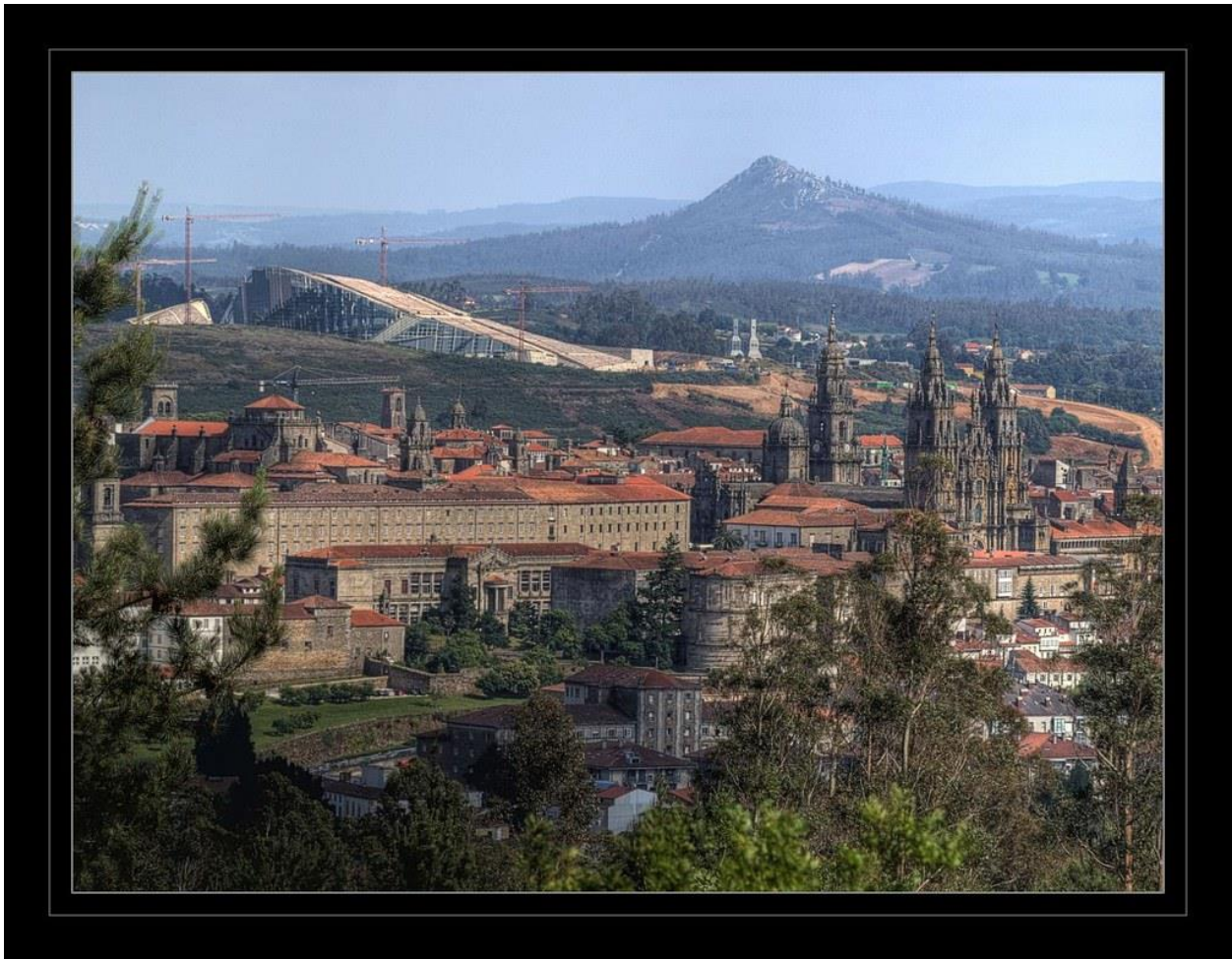
saint's remains, concrete details are missing. Instead, the reader is left with only vague generalities about it being on the lands of the Wolf Queen, not far from Iria Flavia. Later that location will become identified with the place that is known to us as Santiago de Compostela.

When interpreting the contents of Book III of the twelfth-century *Codex Calixtinus* which includes the letter supposedly written by Pope Leo III, who was pope from 795 to 816, there is a problem for scholars hold the epistle in question to be a forgery invented at a much later date to lend support to efforts to garner greater Papal support for the St. James enterprise. According to Melczer, “[t]he attribution to Pope Leo III is, therefore, with all certainty, nothing but a pious, though hardly disinterested, wish. Borrowing from earlier sources, the *epistola leonis episcopi* is actually an eleventh-century composition subsequently elaborated and finally incorporated, for reasons of evident convenience, into the third part of the *Liber*” (Melczer, 1993: 31).

What we cannot know is to what extent the description found in letter attributed to Pope Leo reflects the legends circulating at the time the *Codex* was being compiled or whether we ought to consider it simply as an ingenious narrative made up pretty much out of whole cloth by whoever penned the letter itself. As has been noted, scholars hold the letter in question to be a forgery invented at a much later date to lend support to efforts to garner greater Papal support for the enterprise of St. James. Nonetheless, the document has value since it is the first collection of Galician traditions relating to the Apostle, his two disciples, his subsequent translation from Jerusalem to Iria Flavia and his burial sub Arca Marmorica in the ‘western city’ some 12 miles from Pico Sacro.



**Figure 23.** Contemporary view of Pico Sacro in the distance, taken from a park above the city of Santiago. Photo by José Camba. Source: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/jacob\\_ames/4714462619/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/jacob_ames/4714462619/).



To summarize, if we assume that Pico Sacro is the physical counterpart of the place referred to as Glass Mountain or Crystal Mountain in the folktales we have analyzed, it follows that at some point there could have been pre-Christian traditions of pilgrimage connected to that site. This raises several interrelated questions. The first is whether such pilgrimage traditions and associated acts of veneration at Pico Sacro were still alive at the time when the tomb of St. James was allegedly discovered, sometime in the first half of the ninth century. Or should we assume that by the ninth century these earlier pagan traditions were only vague memories, surviving only in oral belief and translated into occasional trips to the top of Pico Sacro by locals who were familiar with the stories about the dragon who inhabited the deep hole near its peak as well as perhaps the tales about a powerful queen whose domains included this location. The same locals might have visited the site seeking a cure from their ailments. Whatever the status of the extant beliefs surrounding Pico Sacro in the ninth century, the fact that this mountain appears to

correspond to the Crystal or Glass Mountain of oral tradition raises the question of how much of older narrative and associated practices were still alive in the ninth century and the degree to which they became overlaid and eventually replaced by the normativity implicit in the Christian tale.

Yet another enigma surfaces when we consider the implications of how geographically widespread the references to Crystal Mountain are, that is, based on the survivals of references to such a location in European fairytales. Added to the narrative references we have also seen actual social practices grounded in the belief that the soul had to climb this mythical mountain to be able to enter Paradise. In other words, in times past rather than being transmitted only by these oral narratives, the belief in Crystal Mountain must have fed into and in turn been reinforced by these related social practices. It follows that this combination of factors could have led people to undertake pilgrimages probably for a combination of reasons, some of which might be classified as spiritual while others may have been of a more secular nature, motivations perhaps not that distant from those of modern-day pilgrims journeying to Santiago.

### **13.0 Reviewing the St. James' narrative and its legends**

As is well recognized, the veneration of St. James was brought about by means of the highly inventive but totally spurious narrative concocted over time by Christian authorities. It was based on the miraculous discovery of the remains of St. James, some 800 years after he was martyred in the Holy Land and his remains had been brought by boat to Galicia for burial. Thousands of pages have been dedicated to charting the way that the official story was created and the ideological-political purposes that it served, including the many economic, religious and political advantages that the pilgrimage route itself conferred not only on those directly involved in producing and promoting the tale but also many, many other actors (Melczer, 1993; Pérez de Urbel, 1971).<sup>68</sup>

Obviously, today in the more secularized society in which we live, to call into question the truthfulness of the pious narrative is more common and acceptable. However, even forty years ago it was still unusual for scholars to openly state that the emperor had no clothes. An exception was van Herwaarden who wrote the following introduction to his highly detailed study:

James the Great, son of Zebedee and brother of St John, was one of the three Apostles privileged to accompany Jesus on special occasions like the Transfiguration and the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was beheaded in 42 AD by order of Herod. His connection with Spain is here the subject

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<sup>68</sup> The literature concerning the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela is vast and has been approached from many different angles. In 1994, a 508-page bibliography of this literature was published (Dunn & Davidson, 1994). Since then, the list of works published on this topic has expanded exponentially along with the increased popularity of the pilgrimage route itself (Barreiro Rivas, 1997, 2009; Margry, 2015; Márque Villanueva, 2004).

of critical enquiry, and it is demonstrated that there is virtually no evidence at all to substantiate the belief that his mortal remains lie in Spain, at Santiago de Compostela, which became one of the most important pilgrimage centres of the medieval West; nor indeed that he ever preached in Spain or visited that country. It is only in the ninth century that sources begin to mention the discovery of James' burial-place in Spain, while from the seventh century his preaching in Spain is mentioned. From about 800 the legend of St James in Spain took root in Latin Christian tradition. (van Herwaarden, 1980: 1)<sup>69</sup>

Based on snippets from different religious texts and hagiographies, eventually an ingenious and relatively cohesive narrative resulted, one that was skillfully stitched together from different sources over a period of several centuries. Once it took on a life of its own, there were few who were as blunt as van Herwaarden about the totally fictional nature of the story. Moreover, just as it is impossible to determine a sole author for the fairytales that we have analyzed, the hagiographic legend that envelops the site of Santiago de Compostela has no concrete authorship. Rather the story came about through the collective efforts of innumerable individuals, many of whom continue to remain anonymous whereas others are celebrated in the massive literature on this topic. The bottom line, however, continues to be the same: the entire story is an invention. It is a tale that had many threads which eventually were tied together to form a coherent storyline. And this happened because of the determined efforts of people who stood to gain from the success of the narrative even though their immediate motives and even ultimate goals were often very different.

Many thousands of pages have been written concerning the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, exploring in minute detail the sources that were used to justify the central components of the story, allusions to St. James having preached in Hispania and returned to the Holy Land, elaborate discussions of the *translatio*, the transference of his remains by boat back to Iria Flavia after he had been beheaded, the amazing discovery of his remains in the early part of the ninth century, what happened afterward and how by the tenth century news of the cult was bringing pilgrims to the site. Indeed, it has been argued that the high point of its popularity was in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Even during the next two centuries the number of pilgrims was still substantial. Beginning in the 14th century, pilgrimages to Santiago slowed markedly, as did pilgrimages in general. This was due in large part to the Black Death ravaging Europe. Indeed, the pilgrimages to Santiago had almost disappeared when in 1884 Pope Leo XIII

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<sup>69</sup> Usuard's *Martyrologium*, dating from between 850 and 859–860, speaks of St. James' grave being in Hispania, but with no specific location given. "From the ninth century on, the James-legend included the saint's translation from Jerusalem to Spain; the bald mention in Usuard was gradually 'dressed up' into a detailed account (van Herwaarden 1974: 66-69) of a series of miracles: burial in a marble tomb, oblivion, then heavenly signs accompanying the tomb's discovery, finally the numerous wonders of the place of pilgrimage [...]. In later times the miraculous story of the translation was considered less worthy of belief, but it was supposed that the legend concealed a kernel of historical truth and attempts were made to buttress the translation story with facts" (van Herwaarden, 1980: 23-24).

reiterated the claim that James's remains were safely housed a crypt of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela (Roseman, 2004: 77)

As has been noted, when viewed objectively, the narrative surrounding St. James is an elaborate invention, the result of the collaborative efforts of many individuals, some whose names are well known along with untold others whose promotion of the pilgrimage route served to increase their power, prestige and economic fortunes. Even though it was carefully crafted and endlessly repeated, when viewed in the hard light of day the story is a total fiction. However, for centuries to make such a statement was frowned upon, to say the least (Llinares García & Bermejo Barrera, 2017). Indeed, the modern promotion of the pilgrimage route received a new infusion of energy in 1884. This was when Rome declared the authenticity of the remains of St. James that had been “rediscovered.” According to the Church authorities, the whereabouts of his bones had remained in unknown since at least the 16th century when, according to legend, they were hidden for fear that the privateer Francis Drake (who attacked the coast of Coruña in 1589) would come to Santiago de Compostela.<sup>70</sup>

This declaration of authenticity received substantial publicity since it was done by means of the papal bull issued by Pope Leo XIII called *Deus omnipotens*. The pope also announced that the year of 1885 would be an Extraordinary Holy Year for Santiago de Compostela, that is, it would be a Jubilee year in which pilgrims would receive plenary indulgences for undertaking the pilgrimage and visiting the Cathedral at the end of it. According to ecclesiastical sources, it was only in 1879 when the remains of the Apostle were found again after an excavation had been carried out. In 1886, the recuperated relics were placed in an elaborately decorated silver urn in the Cathedral's newly refurbished crypt which is now on display.

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/st-james-way-in-the-modern-day-xunta-de-galicia/9gUh2fbFFpEJw?hl=en-US>.



**Figure 24.** A full view of the crypt with the urn containing the newly discovered remains of St. James the Greater on display in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burial-place\\_of\\_Saint\\_James\\_the\\_Greater.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burial-place_of_Saint_James_the_Greater.JPG).

The affirmation of the rediscovery of the relics of St. James is described in glowing terms in a 2018 article entitled “Faith and Reason on the Way to St. James” posted on the website of Faith Magazine:

This apogee of the pilgrimage to Santiago, third in rank after Jerusalem and Rome, yet somehow more quintessentially a pilgrimage, in the footsteps of James, to the ends of the earth, was doomed to decline with the Reformation and the wars that ensued. England played its own part in ending the pilgrimage, through the ravaging of Sir Francis Drake, threatening to sack Santiago. The relics of St James were buried, and (once again) with the passage of time memory of the location faded. Pilgrimage continued in small numbers, and a tradition persisted that the relics were hidden under the high altar, until the Archbishop ordered excavations in 1879. The relics of St James, and his two disciples, were found, studied by the scientific methods of the time, and were authenticated by Pope Leo XIII in his Bull “*Deus Omnipotens*” of 1884.<sup>71</sup>

No further information is given concerning the “scientific methods” that were utilized to authenticate that the mortal remains uncovered in the excavation were, indeed, those of the Apostle St. James and his two faithful disciples.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. <https://www.faith.org.uk/article/faith-and-reason-on-the-way-to-st-james>.



To summarize, Santiago's reemergence as a focal Catholic site in the modern period can be traced back just over a century and a half ago to the moment when the relics of St. James were relocated and then accepted as valid by Pope Leo XIII (Roseman, 2004: 77). However, the increasing popularity of the pilgrimage was thrown into crisis in the 1930s when the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) broke out. In the post-war years the image of the pilgrimage suffered from the fact that the Franco regime (1939–1975) manipulated the worship of the Patron Saint of Spain and the Camino in support of its doctrine of National Socialism.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, in the 1940s, owing to Francisco Franco's National Catholicism and his promotion of the Spanish tourism industry, the entire old city core of Santiago was named a "national monument." Later, the old pilgrims' hospital was transformed into a *parador* and turned into one of many government-run luxury hotels still operating in Spain. In addition, just as kings and archbishops did at earlier points in its history, Franco himself publicly promoted Santiago on the occasion of the 1965 Jubilee Year celebrations (Roseman, 2004: 77).

That there continues to exist a kind of wink and a nod in terms of admitting the fallacy behind story of the nineteenth-century "rediscovery" of the remains of St. James, we have the example of the webpage of the Regional Government of Galicia where one can read: "When the relics of the Apostle were rediscovered in 1879, this marked a moment of revival for the Way. Although this was held back during the first decades of the 20th century due to wars, particularly the two World Wars and the Spanish Civil War." While it is true that the internationalization of the Way came about, in part, because of this "rediscovery", in recent years it received further impetus when "the pilgrim's route to Santiago was declared the first European Cultural Route by the Committee of Europe in 1987 and a World Heritage Site in 1993, symbolizing the construction of a new Europe" (Colmeiro, 2018: 29). Since then, a major movie, "The Way" (2010), featuring Martin Sheen, was produced, along with novels and other online promotional materials that have attracted tourists to Santiago from all over the world. Undoubtedly the important role played by the cult of St. James in the formation of European identity is linked to the fact that for centuries "the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela traversed the European continent, thus forming the cultural nervous system of medieval Christendom" (Colmeiro, 2018: 29). Indeed, Goethe has been quoted as saying: "The idea of Europe was born along the road to Santiago" (Roseman, 2004: 78).

Today, in contrast to centuries past, undertaking the pilgrimage, whether only by walking part of it or doing all of it, is becoming increasingly popular. As a result, the number of pilgrims registered in Santiago de Compostela has been rising continuously for several decades. In the

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<sup>72</sup> Source: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/st-james-way-in-the-modern-day-xunta-de-galicia/9gUh2fbFFpEJw?hl=en-US>

process, we find that motives of these modern-day pilgrims differ significantly from those of participants in times past. It is a contemporary pilgrimage, whereby religion is only rarely mentioned explicitly. Whereas in centuries past for most participants the pilgrimage tended to be a purely religious practice, the connection between pilgrimage and religion is less clear nowadays. Social science studies show there is a wide diversity of pilgrimage motives. According to Heiser, motives related to personal self-fulfillment are frequently mentioned: “In a multilingual survey of 1,142 pilgrims, more than half of the respondents said they wanted to “find themselves” during the pilgrimage (51.8%), followed by “escape from everyday life” (40.2%), “enjoy silence” (39.2%), “feel spiritual atmosphere” (34.6%), “enjoy nature” (34.4%), and “view beautiful landscapes” (32.9%). Thus, the most frequently mentioned motives were those that could be described as spiritual in a broad sense” (Heiser, 2021).

Naturally, it is not possible to determine the motivations of the pilgrims that took part in the pre-Christian version of the pilgrimage that has been proposed here. Certainly, centuries ago the difficulties involved in traveling across relatively unfamiliar terrain, crossing rivers, and finding food and housing along the way would have been formidable obstacles. On the other hand, it is quite possible that those undertaking the journey did so for similar reasons, including the desire for adventure, self-fulfillment, the opportunity to explore unfamiliar terrains, meet new people and test one’s own physical skills and mental abilities. And combined with these reasons, there could have been the fervent desire to see Pico Sacro with one’s own eyes, a place that our hypothetical pre-Christian pilgrim would already have heard about from storytellers and others who had visited the site previously.

Based on our analysis of the two sets of European folktales, it is obvious that multiple references to ‘glass’ and ‘crystal’ are interwoven into the narratives. Thus, at this juncture I believe we would be on safe ground to say that at some point in the past the choice to use these words to describe the mountain had to have been motivated by direct in-person contact with the site itself. And that contact also probably involved listening to the stories associated with the site, namely, the two sets of folktales we have discussed. On the one hand, we have the Bear's Son tale featuring a deep hole in the ground where the hero ends up trapped, and on the other, “The Search for the Lost Husband” in which the heroine scales Glass Mountain and rescues her bear husband from the clutches of a powerful woman. And intertwined with all of this is the animist relational ontology and the belief in ursine ancestors.

Those who visited the site would have gone back home and told others about what they had experienced. In the process they would have repeated the narratives they had heard linked to features found at the site. They would have explained to their friends and relatives how the details matched the reality of what they had seen. That is, concrete physical features of the site

that appeared in the stories were elements whose reality they could personally vouch for. However, we can also see that over time, there was a rupture in the way information about the site was transmitted, that it ceased to be transmitted through testimonies based on direct contact with the site. We might speculate that the breakdown accelerated when the meaning of the pre-Christian pilgrimage route became overlaid by the Christian narrative of St James. However, there is also the strong possibility that centuries earlier the number of pagan visitors journeying to Pico Sacro had already been greatly reduced. In any case, at some point Pico Sacro became nothing more than a mythical location in the minds of Europeans. And the memory of the physical space survived only in the folkloric references to Glass Mountain found in stories recorded across Europe.<sup>73</sup> It is only when the pieces of the puzzle are put back together again that the larger picture comes into view. And that picture is one that sheds light on an aspect of European thought and social practice that until now has gone unnoticed.

## 14.0 Final Observations on the Need for Reflexivity

In the initial sections of this study, I spoke of the debates that have been going on concerning the implications of the so-called “ontological turn.” Whereas these conversations have become a central focus in recent years in the fields of ethnography, anthropology and archaeology, they have not had a significant impact on the theoretical approaches that have been employed to tease out meaning from the two sets of European folktales investigated in this work. As has been noted, the theoretical framework built into the ontological turn has two applications. On the one hand, it is argued that the key to understanding non-Western societies is to reconstruct their ontologies since the latter are a fundamental component of their underlying cosmology and, hence, overall worldview (Haber, 2009; Nadasdy, 2007). On the other hand, exploring those non-Western ontologies starts with the need for more self-awareness on the part of researchers concerning the core beliefs of Western thought. And to achieve this type of reflexivity is not

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<sup>73</sup> Although outside the scope of this study, I would note that further investigations into the symbolic uses of quartz, particularly its linkage to death and the afterlife, may shed additional light on this topic (Teema, Nordqvist, & Herva, 2017; T. Thompson, 2004, 2005). For example, if we were to assume that actual quartz crystals were symbolic substitutes for having climbed Crystal Mountain or as a means of facilitating the soul’s entrance into the afterlife, their presence in sites having mortuary uses, such as certain megaliths, especially dolmens, might be explained. Of course, that would require projecting the belief in Crystal Mountain far back in time: “In archaeological excavations of the megaliths of Ireland (and in the British Isles, generally), we find the use of white quartz/quartzite crystals. Such a tradition is a hallmark of the British Isles. These crystals were often transported over long distances to be used in sacred structures. At times massive white quartz boulders were employed; even more common are the scatterings of white quartz pebbles found in stone circles, mounds, court cairns and burial tombs. Indeed, the huge temple at Newgrange integrated these quartz pebbles in its design (as can be seen is in its modern, renovated state). Frank Mitchel estimated, regarding the decorative cobbles, that “at least ten tonnes of stone were carried for a distance of at least 40 km to reach Newgrange,” most of which was quartz (Mitchell, 1992: 135). Two large quartz blocks appear to have acted as a door for the roof-box, allowing periodic re-entry (O’Kelly, 1982: 123)” (T. Thompson, 2004: 358-359).



easy. It requires a major conceptual reorientation, not easily accomplished since many of these core beliefs are held without reflection: they form the background of unarticulated convictions that the investigator holds unreflectively—unconsciously—and that, therefore, the person may not even recognize are operating.

In this study the non-Western relational ontology that has been the object of analysis is really part and parcel of an older indigenous European worldview that has been overlaid by more modern frames of reference. Indeed, there are several reasons that could be cited for the lack of reflexivity on the part of European scholars who have attempted to interpret the meaning of these tales. Among them is the assumption that the framework that originally gave rise to the tales is the same as the one that folklorists use, quite automatically, to interpret them. In the case of those elements in the folktales that did not conform to contemporary understandings, these were often dealt with as examples of the backward mindset still alive in certain marginal sectors of society. Here we need to remember that originally the word *folk* was applied only to rural, often poor and frequently illiterate peasants.

Also complicating discussions of the meaning of these stories has been the competing approaches utilized to analyze them. On the one hand, there have been those who saw the tales as emanating from the non- or semi-literate stratum of society, the so-called popular or peasant class. That assignation was also used to explain why such naïve concepts as shapeshifting continued to be propagated in the tales. But these elements were not taken seriously by researchers studying the tales as representing an authentic aspect of an earlier and more widespread worldview. Again, here the normativity of the Western scientific worldview is evident. On the other hand, we have these comments by the renowned folklorist Andrew Lang who, writing in 1892, suggested that the prevalence of talking animals in the European tales could be compared to their frequency in African folktales and hence indicative of the survival of an earlier stage of European thinking more in consonance with that of other non-Western ontologies (Lang, 1967 [1892]).

After Lang attempted to compare European fairytales to those of other cultures, he reached the following conclusion, a passage in which the terminology typical 19th century anthropology is employed, based on a model that held that all societies pass through three basic stages of development, referred to as Savagery, Barbarism and finally Civilization. Even though some nineteenth-century writers sought to set forth each stage as clearly defined from the previous one, Lang was aware the stage associated with Europe, namely, that of Civilization, was not so starkly differentiated from Savagery as some might think, and that survivals from that earlier stage remained accessible, e.g., having talking animals as characters in fairytales.

Furthermore, I perceived that the tales varied in “culture” with the civilization of the people who told them. Among savages, say Bushmen, or in a higher grade Zulus, the characters are far more frequently *animals* than in European *märchen*. The Bushman girl who answers to Medea is not the daughter of a wizard king, but the wife of an elephant. The same peculiarity marks savage religious myths. The gods are beasts or birds. These facts led me to suppose that the [European] tales were very ancient, and had been handed down, with a gradual refining, from ages of savagery to ages of civilization. (Lang, 1967 [1892]: xii)

Lang goes on to say, again speaking of the European folktales:

But the peasant class which retains the tales has been so conservative and unaltered, that many of the wilder features of the original tale (discarded in early artistic and national epic) linger on in *märchen*. Thus, in most peasant versions of the Cinderella theme, the wonder-working character is a beast, a sheep in Scotland; sometimes that beast has been the heroine’s mother. In our usual Cinderella, derived from Perrault’s version (1697), the wonder-working character is a fairy godmother. [...]. (Lang, 1967 [1892]: xii-xiii)

However, the possibility that not too long ago such an animist interpretative framework was alive and functioning in Europe has not been seriously investigated, in part because of the human-animal divide so firmly entrenched in Western thought. At the same time, the model of Western identity has been one in which Europeans have often portrayed themselves as sitting at the apex of ‘Civilization’, a tendency especially prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In contrast, cultures that reject the asymmetric culture-nature dualism and the attendant view of human exceptionalism, such as the Native American Ojibwe group studied by Hallowell, have been placed much lower on the evolutionary scale. That unilinear evolutionary cultural model left animist paradigms representing the state of Savagery and consequently, the Other (Trouillot, 1991). Still today, to call someone an ‘animal’ is considered an insult, not a statement of fact. In short, such comparisons continue to elicit a negative reaction, long after Darwin and others established the animal ancestry of humans.

In addition to these persistent conceptual impediments, another reason for this nearly total lack of attention to the ontological implications of the tales been the research paradigm dominant in folkloristics, at least until quite recently, namely, the tendency to analyze folktales primarily by classifying the *motifs* and *tale types* that show up in them. As is well recognized, in the 1930s Stith Thompson built upon the research of Antti Arne and the tale type index in compiling, categorizing and numbering the traditional motifs of the mostly European folktale types in Aarne’s index. These motifs were cross referenced with Aarne’s tale types, creating a comprehensive numerical mechanism for discussing and breaking down the texts.

This approach has been highly successful in terms of providing a basis for comparing and classifying folktales. As Alan Dundes stated, some twenty years ago, Stith Thompson’s “six-volume *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* and the Aarne-Thompson tale type index constitute two of the most valuable tools in the professional folklorist’s arsenal of aids for analysis” (Dundes,

1997: 195). Nevertheless, this approach is purely synchronic in its application. By breaking down the plot, folklorists have been able to utilize the concept of motif to refer to story elements that are easily recognizable and which can be readily extracted from the texts themselves. In this way the elements identified can be employed to compare the material in a given collection of folktales. At the same time these motifs are viewed as consistently repeated elements such as common characters, events, actions and objects. As such, the motifs can be treated as independent elements that form part of what are understood as traditional plot structures or *tale types*.

While this approach has its advantages, it is not geared to analyzing the uniqueness of the plots nor does it pay attention the myriad of different ways that the same component parts of a given tale type can fit together sequentially. More importantly, as has been repeatedly stated in this study, is the fact that all orally transmitted tales, at least until they are put into written form, have an intrinsic dynamic aspect, a diachronic axis—they are constantly in flux. The current version is the result of prior acts by storytellers who in turn had an audience whose interpretative framework was constantly undergoing change, just as was the storyteller's own set of cultural conceptualizations which were activated at each retelling of the tale. Moreover, the elements making up the plot of a given tale do not necessarily belong to the same chronological strata. Nor is there any certainty that the oldest written version of a tale always should be understood to be the basis of versions collected at a later date.

At any point in time there is a diachronic axis inherent in both the production and the reception of orally transmitted folktales. And the same can be said of tales that have been frozen in time by being rendered into written form: these, too, have a diachronic axis in terms of their reception. Whereas today the tales tend not to be retold orally, their reception continues to change across time. Indeed, as is well recognized, these written texts have provided the basis for new interpretations of the tales not only in written form, but also across other platforms, art, theater, film, TV, YouTube, blogs on the Internet, etc.<sup>74</sup>

Questions such as when and where did a given tale first appear, and how it diffused across space and time have been asked many times. But the answers are far from forthcoming. Rather the evidence allows us to see some as far-travelled tales and to trace how they passed, vertiginously, from one cultural group and language to another. Although careful comparative analyses might reveal the track laid down by the processes of transmission in historically

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<sup>74</sup> For a recent highly creative animated YouTube retelling of “East of the Sun, West of the Moon,” cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmmRwv3wv7k> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftCTBWb0cbw> or this retelling of the tale for young children: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Upq8tcIVh0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Upq8tcIVh0).

documented contexts, a problem arises when it comes to pinpointing a specific geographical center out of which a given tale type emanated, such as ATU 301 or ATU 425A.

As for the time depth that should be assigned to a given tale, in the case of literary folktales their age is fixed by their date of publication. For instance, we know that the work by Apuleius, namely, the tale of “Cupid and Psyche,” dates to the 2nd century CE. The consensus view is that Apuleius was drawing on older oral versions of the tale that were circulating at the time and with which he was familiar. That means that the date of Apuleius’ work does not solve the question of the age of the tale. Rather it leaves us with another unanswered question since we do not know how long these stories had been circulating as part of oral tradition before the Roman writer incorporated his knowledge of them into his book *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass* (Swahn, 1955).

Consequently, in the case of the orally transmitted tales themselves, efforts to assign a concrete time frame to the earliest conceivable iteration of them require a different approach. And this need for an alternate approach, led us to address a different but related question, namely, whether there was a way to peel back the overlapping and often fused motifs found in the variants and come up with the interpretive frame that initially set the tale in motion and was built into the plotline chosen. And that frame rests on the cultural conceptualizations shared by the storytellers who invented the tale.

Clearly, while it is impossible to assign a precise date to when the animist ontological coding came to be shared by the storytellers and their audiences, the cultural frames embedded in that ontology resonate strongly with the frames of reference documented among Native American and Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the traditional narratives of these Native groups harken back to a forager mentality where hunting played a key role as well as the belief that bears were ancestors and kin. In addition, as has been discussed, among Native American and other Indigenous groups the animist relational ontology was reflected in traditional narratives that had human beings turning into bears and vice-versa. And this is further proof of the absence of the human-animal divide so common to Western thought.

In this study, it has been argued that to understand the earlier interpretive frame of these two sets of European tales we must recognize the key role played by this persistent and thoroughly entrenched human-animal dichotomy in shaping the way these tales have been interpreted. And that this opposition is an integral component of the asymmetric culture-nature duality intrinsic to Western thought and that, in turn, for so many centuries has served to set human animals apart from the rest of Nature.

In summary, the ATU tale type classification system is only a reference tool, i.e., a system of classification giving access to texts and literature. The system is a kind of research paradigm or model that has permitted the recording of different structural elements. However, the paradigm is less applicable when dealing diachronically with the levels of meaning and the functions of individual motifs within the structure of the plot. Indeed, the application solely of this classification system can lead to “a fragmentation of content segments” (Uther, 1997: 210) or what Röhrich has called an “atomization of elements” (Röhrich, 1976: 148). Writing in 1997, Uther made the following observation which is still for the most part true: “As the history of type and motif indexes shows, the search for principles serving the classification of folk narratives has not yet produced a satisfying system, but indexes have provided scholars with “many valuable and practical research instruments, many methodical and theoretical by-products,” as Vilmos Voigt asserts (Voigt, 1977: 570)” (Uther, 1997: 215).<sup>75</sup>

In this study I have attempted to engage with the texts from a different angle, placing more emphasis on the overall storyline and above all on the reconstruction of the worldview that might have undergirded earlier versions of the tales. In short, I have tried to approach the tales as ‘memory banks’ where traces of earlier belief and survivals from prior iterations of the tale can be identified. On that note, it is appropriate to cite the insightful words of Bakhtin for they certainly are applicable to study of this admittedly complex and multifaceted topic:

Cultural and literary traditions (including the most ancient) are preserved and continue to live not in the individual subjective memory of a single individual and not in some kind of collective “psyche,” but rather in the objective forms that culture itself assumes (including the forms of language and spoken speech), and in this sense they are inter-subjective and inter-individual (and consequently social); from there they enter literary works, sometimes almost completely bypassing the subjective individual memory of their creators. (Bakhtin, 1981: 249).

Until now, the two sets of European tales studied here have been viewed as nothing more than innocuous, although highly imaginative creations, with no further value in terms of providing insights into the way that in times past European storytellers and their audiences conceived the world. While the tales are recognized as forming an integral part of the cultural heritage of Europe, they have not been viewed as vehicles that might provide access to much older indigenous understandings built upon an animist relational ontology. Indeed, no serious consideration has been given to the clear signs of the animist relational ontology embedded in the tales, the shapeshifting resulting in these fluid border crossings of human and non-human persons. Instead, these features of the tales have been written off as nothing more than flights of

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<sup>75</sup> Among these products, one that bears mentioning is the concept of *ecotypes*. It is linked to the figure of Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878–1952) and his efforts to alter the theoretical bases of the geographic-historic (Finnish) school of folklore studies. Cf. Hasan-Rokem (2016) and Cochrane (1987).

childish fancy. Furthermore, the possibility has never been entertained that, as is the case of traditional tales told by Native Americans, deeply entrenched in the tales are echoes of an archaic belief that held bears were both ancestors and kin.

Certainly, over time modifications in these European tales came about through a combination of lapses of memory and the subtle effects of shaping the tale to better conform to the expectations of the audience and the prevailing interpretive framework. That process was inevitable for it was brought about diachronically by the gradual changes taking place in the worldview of those who were telling the tales and trying to remember them from one iteration to the next. Thus, the plot and associated meanings of the tale, rather than being fixed, were subtly recontextualized by the changing cultural conceptualizations of the speakers. Luckily, enough was left behind for us to be able to recuperate many aspects of the earlier worldview. Particularly important in this process have been the Basque versions of the tales along with those collected in Spain and France. The interpretation of these European tales has been supplemented by the insights afforded by the animist relational ontology instantiated in the traditional tales of Native Americans as well as by the extensive work of anthropologists concerned with recapturing and documenting the ursine linked ontology.

In the case of Europe, as other researchers have documented, the struggle of the medieval church against the bear and this older ursine cosmology was relatively successful in terms of eliminating overt traces of the ancient bear cult along with the belief that bears were both ancestors and kin (Pastoreau, 2011). The older belief was one that went against the human exceptionalism propagated by the Church, i.e., the stark human-animal divide that set human animals apart from the rest of Nature. What the Church was not able to do was to stop storytellers from passing on the tenets of the older ursine cosmology, albeit often unconsciously and unreflexively, in the covert form of traditional narratives. Indeed, these stories insured that the life and times of these bear-humans would be transmitted orally, under the radar, across many generations. With the passage of time, the narratives would be translated from one language to another. That process, too, would introduce modifications and significant fragmentation of the narrative structure along with an increasing loss of awareness of the underlying animistic cosmovision. Nonetheless, in spite of these changes, we have still been able to detect the significant traces of the of earlier animist worldview in the tales analyzed in this study.

## **15.0 Conclusions**

Over the past two centuries a vast amount of time and effort has been expended by folklorists in documenting and classifying the hundreds of variants of the tale types analyzed in this study. It

is, therefore, quite remarkable how little attention has been given to the following question, namely, whether any of the common threads running through them had an origin in something other than the wild imagination of these primarily rural and frequently illiterate storytellers. Despite the repeated appearance of characters of mixed ancestry, half-human, half-bear, there has been no consideration given to the possibility that until now Western researchers have been blinded by their own narrow normative mindset; that they have been relying unreflectively on the dualisms still dominant in Western thought, such as the stark human-animal divide. As we have seen, a far different picture comes into view when we bring into play the insights that can be drawn from a cross-cultural approach, specifically one that takes seriously the animist relational worldview of Native Americans, for example. We have seen that their worldview includes bears as ancestors and kin and that this core belief was projected onto their traditional narratives. A similar process seems to have occurred in the case of the European tales analyzed here.



**Figure 25.** View of upper reaches of Pico Sacro. Source: <https://vivecamino.com/en/boqueixon/pico-sacro-3118/>.

At the beginning of this investigation, I stated that it would be difficult to pin down the where, when and how of the ultimate origins of these two sets of tales. And even at this point, there are still many unresolved questions including the following. Even if we trace the origins of these tales back to the concrete physical location of Pico Sacro, we end up being confronted with the question of what came first. For instance, did someone invent a story and then discover that it

could be mapped on physical attributes of this location? Or, what is more likely, did the natural features of the milieu suggest a backdrop to the storytellers onto which salient features of the story could be projected while the contours of the tale itself would be drawn on the preexisting animist relational ontology. In any case, being physically present on Pico Sacro and hearing the story retold would have allowed for what Honko (2013 [1981]) has referred to as milieu-morphological adaptation to take place. The natural formations of Pico Sacro would become, according to tradition, places where the mythological happenings had taken place. Thus the storytelling “tradition was adapted to the local physical environment by means of anchoring itself to concrete places” (Kamppinen, 2014: 19).<sup>76</sup>

We might imagine a scenario in which generations of pagan pilgrims, driven by a mixture of religious conviction and curiosity, wended their way across Europe, visiting Pico Sacro and



perhaps moving on to the coast and Finisterre to view the setting sun at a location they considered to be “the end of the earth.” In the process, both coming and going, people would have had ample opportunity to engage in conversations with others. When they were visiting Pico Sacro, they would have heard the two stories repeated and had the physical counterparts of the salient elements of the narratives pointed out to them. For example, they would have visited the looming cave entrance and peered into bottomless vertical shaft leading to the Underworld where the Bear’s Son killed the dragon and was later trapped. And then there would have been those impressive quantities of crystalline quartz that

appeared right before their very eyes, just as they had anticipated, based on what they had been told earlier back home.

Being confronted with the actual physical evidence certainly would have left a lasting impression on the visitors. So much so that when they returned home, they would have retold the stories with greater conviction. Moreover, once back home, they would have recounted their own adventures and shared all the stories they had heard which, in turn, would have encouraged others to undertake the same journey. In short, the pilgrimage would have acted as a conduit for the stories and a way to keep the memory of Glass Mountain alive even among those who had never set foot on its slopes. However, over time, the collective memory of the reality of these pilgrimages and Glass Mountain itself would fade away, leaving behind only the folkloric

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<sup>76</sup> For further commentary on the role of narrative space and spatial transference in the fairy-tale genre, cf. Kujundžić (2020).



evidence found in these oral traditions. Nevertheless, across many centuries the tales themselves have acted to keep these vague memories of this much earlier worldview circulating, albeit in a very modified form.

Over the course of this interdisciplinary investigation what slowly has come into view is a deeply rooted European cultural tradition, one that was transmitted across time through oral storytelling. At present even though it is not possible to determine with certainty the age of the tradition itself, there is no question that we are dealing with understandings that have been conserved orally at a minimum for two millennia. Thus, the investigation has been an exercise in analyzing and contextualizing a tradition in the *longue durée* (Braudel, 1958). While many aspects of the tradition, its related social practices and the animist ontology that supported it, have been brought into focus, as Thompson has pointed out, when discussing “the *longue durée*, it is important to reiterate that such a concept does not imply that meanings do not change, or that by examining modern or recent examples we can ‘really know’ the meanings behind the older examples: it simply means that, as traditions are remembered and re-created, and as each re-creation builds on the previous, certain motifs and associations can occasionally be carried over great spans of time” (T. Thompson, 2005: 112).

## Appendix 1. Guide to Tale Types and Blends<sup>77</sup>

### ATU 301. “The Three Stolen Princesses”

Although classified under the rubric of “The Three Stolen Princesses,” it is also referred to informally as “The Bear’s Son Tale” and “John the Bear.” It has four subtypes (ATU 301A, B, C and D):

**ATU 301A.** “Quest for a Vanished Princess”

**ATU 301B.** “Quest for The Strong Man and His Companions Journey to the Land of Gold”

**ATU 301C.** “The Magic Objects”

**ATU 301D.** “The Dragons Ravish Princesses”

**ATU 301** is often combined with elements emanating from:

**ATU 302.** “The Ogre’s (Devil’s) Heart in the Egg”

**ATU 554.** “The Grateful Animals”

**ATU 650A.** “Strong John” (“Der Starke Hans”)

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<sup>77</sup> For an even finer grained breakdown of the tales, cf.  
<https://libraryguides.missouri.edu/c.php?g=1039894&p=7610331>.

As has been noted, there are several examples of Spanish language tales where there is a melding of motifs from ATU 301, ATU 302, ATU 650A and ATU 554. Developmentally, the more primitive plot contains the supernatural Animal Helpers, rather than the participation of the two or three anthropomorphic giants found in other variants of ATU301. The primitive storyline also features the defeat of the snake (portrayed later as an ogre or dragon) by means of a blow to the forehead with the magic egg.

#### **ATU 425 “The Search for the Lost Husband”**

The tale type 425 has three subtypes in which the ‘lost husband’ is portrayed as an animal (e.g., bear, snake, lizard, wolf, pig, crow, swan, etc.). The motif of ‘iron shoes’ or ‘iron claws’ is prevalent.

##### **ATU 425A. “The Animal Bridegroom”**

##### **ATU 425B “Son of the Witch” (previously “The Disenchanted Husband: The Witch’s Tasks” (Cupid and Psyche)**

##### **ATU 425C. “Beauty and the Beast”**

The main lines of the plot of the ATU 425 tale type, as reconstructed here, are as follows: The father meets an animal, often in the woods, who asks for one of his daughters, usually the youngest. The father tries to deceive the animal sending a different daughter or some other girl pretending to be his daughter. But the animal always discovers the truth, and the youngest daughter ends up having to go live with the animal. At night the animal takes off its skin or coat and turns into a handsome man (a prince). Because of his animal nature, the young woman is finally convinced by her catty sisters that she should burn his coat so he can’t transform back into an animal. To do this, she waits until he is asleep, lights a candle and is about to burn his coat when some drops of wax fall in his body, waking him. An alternative to this scenario is for the heroine or somebody else, like her jealous sisters, to burn the animal’s coat.

Because of this incident the bridegroom must leave his bride who in turn must go searching for him. He tells her that until she wears out the iron shoes that he gives her she will not find him. He instructs her to go hunt for him, sometimes also saying she must dress as a pilgrim. During her travels she meets three entities or stops at three locations and receives three gifts. These turn out to be magic amulets. Finally, sometimes after climbing a Glass Mountain, she reaches the location where her bridegroom is and discovers he is about to marry another woman. The heroine uses her tokens in exchange for the opportunity to spend time with the bridegroom in his chamber. The two first nights the heroine can’t wake the prince because he has been drugged. But on the third occasion, he is forewarned, and just pretends to drink the sleeping potion before going to bed. While appearing to be asleep he hears everything his true bride has

done for him, and his memories come back. The key to him recognizing the heroine is the fact that by now she has worn out her iron shoes, as he had predicted. In the end the prince marries his true bride.

### **ATU 510 “Cinderella and Peau d’Âne”**

This tale type number refers to a cycle of related tales (ATU 510A and ATU 510B).

**ATU 510A** “Cinderella” (Cenerentola, Cendrillon, Aschenputtel).

**ATU 510B** “Peau d’Âne” (previously “The Dress of Gold, of Silver and of Stars”).

Today discussions of “Cinderella” (ATU 510A) tend to draw strongly on Perrault’s version of the story. By doing so, information contained in the many variants of the tale is glossed over and the remarkable similarities between the plot of ATU 510A and that of ATU 425 (ATU 425A, 425B and 425C) are not clearly perceived, including the recognition element brought about by means of the heroine’s shoes which is common to both sets of tales.

### **ATU 530 “The Princess on Glass Mountain”**

Finally, there is the tale type referred to as “The Princess on Glass Mountain” in which we come across the figure of the Male Cinderella. Folklorists such as Johannes Bolte and Jiří Polívka (Bolte & Polívka, 1913:184-185)<sup>78</sup> as well as Marian Roalfe Cox named the main character of this tale type *männlichen Aschenbrödel* (a male Cinderella), because the protagonist usually sleeps in the ashes, or plays in ashes and soot. Alternatively, he is often found at home by the stove, in shabby and dirty clothes, and is often mocked by his family for this strange (and otherwise inexplicable) behaviour (Howitt & Howitt, 1852, Vol. 1, 223). In English translations of these tales the protagonist is commonly named Ashboy, Ashlad, Cinderface or some variation of these names.

In ATU 530 it is a man who seeks to free a princess who is located or trapped atop a Glass Mountain. One interpretation of these tales has been that a gender reversal took place. However, as has been argued, if viewed from another angle there is a strong possibility that elements from the plots of several tale types got melded together. While the overlap of motifs in ATU 530 and ATU 510A are patently obvious, the intrusion of motifs from ATU 301, ATU 302 and ATU 554 have not caught the attention of investigators. In summary, rather than a simple gender inversion having produced the narratives categorized as Male Cinderella tales, something more complex appears to have been taking place in the process of retelling and hence restructuring the plot.

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<sup>78</sup> For direct access to the text, cf. Digitale Volltext-Ausgabe bei Wikisource, URL: [https://de.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Seite:Grimms M%C3%A4rchen Anmerkungen \(Bolte Polivka\) I 184.jpg&oldid=-](https://de.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Seite:Grimms_M%C3%A4rchen_Anmerkungen_(Bolte_Polivka)_I_184.jpg&oldid=-) .

## Appendix 2. Reconnecting to Väinämöinen

The book by Ørnulf Hodne (1984) contains references to many variants of the Norwegian tale “White Bear King Valemon,” only known to most through the version recorded by Asbjørnsen and Moe and published in 1871 as No. 90. in their work *Norske Folke-Eventyr. Ny Samling*. (Asbjørnsen & Moe, 1871: 154-162) The title of their version was “White-Bear-King Valemon” (*Kvitebjørn kong Valemon*). The tale was subsequently translated by George Webbe Dasent for his collection *Tales of the Field* (Dasent, 1874: 353-363) and since then it has become the version of reference for folklorists. In contrast, in the variants discussed in Hodne’s work the male character shows up with many slightly different names. Among them are Knight Varivan (1852), White-Bear-King Valemon (*Kvitebjørn kong Valemon*) (1871), Knight Vaimann (1879), Knight Valian (1880), King Salemon (1891), King Videvallbjørn (1905), and King Valivan (1913). The lack of uniformity is striking: Vaimann, Valemon, Salemon, Varivan, Valivan, Valian, and Videvallbjørn,

In the case of the name Videvallbjørn, once the adjective ‘white’ (*vide/kvite*) and the noun ‘bear’ (*bjørn*) are removed, all that is left of the original name is *-vall-*. Again, it should be emphasized that when these tales were being collected, the Norwegian folklorists were attempting to reproduce what they were hearing in the mouths of their rural informants. There was no preexisting literary tradition for the tale. Consequently, the vacillation in the spelling of the names, as rendered by the collectors, suggests that in the nineteenth century and even later, when the tales were first written down there was no clear understanding on the part of the informants themselves concerning how to pronounce the name of the king or knight.

Moreover, the fact that the name Valemon is assigned to the bear-human protagonist found in the most popular version of the tale, the one collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe, might lead us to conclude that the name Valemon was common in Norway. However, that conclusion would be false. According to a study of Norwegian names carried out in 2000 by the Norwegian folklorist Tormod Bryn, using Norwegian government statistics, in Norway there were “less than three or zero” persons called Valemon.<sup>79</sup> By 2014, one statistical search of Norwegian names turned up a grand total of four examples of Valemon forming part of the person’s forename (cf. <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/navn/aar/2015-01-27>). Although far from being a scientific sampling, at the following site there are no examples of any Norwegian surnames in the pages corresponding to those listed above as names of the bear-human hero: [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:Norwegian-language\\_surnames&from=V](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Category:Norwegian-language_surnames&from=V).

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<sup>79</sup> Personal communication from Tormod Bryn, March 20, 2000.

As we have seen, when the different names assigned to the male character are compared, we find a definite lack of certainty as to how the name should be pronounced. This ambivalence appears to reflect the difficulty informants had when they attempted to capture the pronunciation of the character's name as they had heard it pronounced by others. And this vacillation on their part gave rise to the many variant spellings in the written versions of the stories. However, the confusion over how the name should be written down might have a more complex explanation. It could be explained by the fact that what these informants had heard repeated by others was a term not recognizable to them because it emanated from a different language, namely, Finnish rather than Norwegian. What I suspect is the following: at some point in time the legendary Finnish figure of Väinämöinen was drawn into the orbit of tale and his name got attached to that of the bear-human hero. After passing through generations of storytellers, the name Väinämöinen ended up essentially unrecognizable, although the variant of Vaimann seems to be a faint echo of the Finnish term. In short, the Finnish pronunciation of the name Väinämöinen would have been unfamiliar and strange sounding especially to the ears of Norwegian speakers. As a result, it easily could have been misunderstood and eventually modified.

In contrast, today Väinämöinen is a name easily recognized as a central figure in Finnish folklore. He is one of the chief characters in the national epic known as the *Kalevala*, a collection of ballads, songs and incantations published by Elias Lönnrot, first in 1835 and then in an enlarged edition in 1849. Väinämöinen is described as a culture hero, a semi-deity, a wise old man who possesses a potent, magical singing voice. But he also has a connection to bears which might have been what allowed his name to become associated with the bear in the folktale. As a central figure of many ancient mythological songs, Väinämöinen appears as an extraordinary shaman who is a master of magic songs and incantations. And among these songs, there was one attributed to him in which he is said to tell the story of the origins of the lord of the forest, i.e., the bear. Hallowell in his classic study of bear ceremonialism includes this pertinent passage:

In Rune 46 of the *Kalevala* we find a poetic description of the slaughter of a bear by Väinämöinen and the triumphal return of the hunter to the people of *Kalevala* with the carcass. The bear (Otso) was 'joyfully and respectfully welcomed' and 'the ceremonies befitting such an event were all observed with songs which have remained national, expressing regard and affection for the terrible yet valuable creature. The skin having been removed, a sumptuous, animated funeral banquet was held in his honour and Väinämöinen sang of the origin and story of this lord of the forest. From a comparative point of view there are quite a few items of special interest for us in the account as narrated in the epic. (Hallowell, 1926: 96)<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Today we have a great more information on the role of bears in Finnish and Nordic cultures (cf. Pentikäinen, 2007; Piludu, 2019a, 2019b; Sarmela, 2006; Sarmela & Poom, 1982).

One of the main reasons for researchers not having noticed the odd makeup of the various names given to the main character in the Norwegian tales lies in the way that this tale along with the much longer story “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” with its highly similar plot, was recruited to help establish the notion of Norwegian cultural identity. The latter tale has been characterized as one of the most famous and archetypical Norwegian folktales collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe (Gunnell, 2010). As was the case with Grimms’ *Deutsche Sagen and Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the works of the Norwegian collectors need to be viewed in the wider context of the role played by folktales in the romantically inspired nationalistic struggle for national identity that was taking place in Europe during the nineteenth century. In the case of Norway, that country’s struggle for national identity and independence from Sweden, after years under Danish rule, was a strong motivation for the collection of the folktales and their transformation into symbols of national cultural identity (Gunnell, 2010: 13; Hodne, 1984: 92-98).

The fact that product spin-offs and imagery from tales such as “White Bear King Valemon” and “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” are so prominent in modern-day Norwegian society bears witness to their importance as symbols of the cultural identity of that nation. As Ellingsen has put it: “Together with other folktales, “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” is a key piece in our understanding of who we are as a nation and a people; it is simply Norwegian” (Ellingsen, 2019: 2). However, as Ellingsen goes on to explain, these tales form part of a wider European legacy and are not unique to Norway. Nevertheless, the treatment received by “East of the Sun and West of the Moon” was the same as that of “White Bear King Valemon,” namely, that both tales were elevated and turned into icons of Norwegian cultural identity. And that process has impeded comparative analyses such as the one proposed here which suggests that the latter tale may have gotten mixed up with Finnish story-telling traditions and the equally iconic and culturally laden figure of Väinämöinen.

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